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'Working It Out': The Educational Careers and Aspirations of Students on an AVCE Travel and Tourism Course at a College of FHE

Doctor of Education (EdD)

No part of this work has previously been submitted as examinable work to the university or to any other body. Save for any express acknowledgements cited in this work, I confirm that the intellectual content of the work is the results of my own efforts and of no other person

Submitted: 2007

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Glossary of Terms

ABTAC: Association of British Travel Agents Certificate

AVCE: Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education

BA: Bachelor of Arts Degree

BTEC: Business and Technology Education Council (Examining Board)

ET: Education and Training

FdA: Foundation Degree

FE: Further Education

FG: Focus Group (eg FG1 = Focus Group 1)

FHE: Further and Higher Education

GALILEO: Airline industry fares and ticketing software system

GCSE: General Certificate of Secondary Education

HE: Higher Education

HESA: Higher Education Statistics Agency

HND: Higher National Diploma

IATA: International Association of Travel Agents

ND: National Diploma (Level 3 vocational course)

NLT: National Learning Targets

NVQ: National Vocational Qualification

OFSTED: Office for Standards in Education

ONS: Office of National Statistics

PCET: Post-compulsory education and training

RAT: Rational Action Theory

TMSA: Transformational Model of Social Activity

VET: Vocational Education and Training

Abstract

This study investigated the decision-making processes, and the factors affecting them, in relation to education and labour markets of young people aged 16—19 following a full-time Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) vocational education course in Travel and Tourism at a College of FHE in the West Midlands. In particular, the study sought to evaluate the evidence for the persistence of structurally related (race, class, gender) inequalities in youth post-16 educational attainment against the theory of individualization in youth transitions.

The research adopted a case study approach involving:

- questionnaire survey of 72 first and second year students of the AVCE;*
- three focus group interviews with second year students of the AVCE;*
- eleven individual interviews and one double interview with second year students of the AVCE;*
- nine individual interviews with members of the AVCE teaching staff.*

The study developed a theoretical model to represent the decision-making processes of students both prior to and within further education, adapting and developing the concept of 'institutional habitus. The model also recognises the relationships between macro (society), meso (institutional/organisational) and micro (individual) factors.

Principally, the study found evidence of differences between students of the white majority group and students of the minority ethnic groups with regards to experiences of further education and orientations towards higher education and labour markets. Secondly, class and gender-based differences within the minority ethnic student samples were also perceived. Evidence was also found for the class and gender-based positioning of students by the teaching staff with consequent implications for the reproduction of classed and gendered inequalities. These findings indicate that research into student aspirations and decision-making must recognise the continuing influence of the prior structural factors of the students and their personal histories, and also the impact of their institutional experiences, particularly as mediated by the teaching staff of an organisation.

Chapter One: The Context of this Study

It is my belief that no piece of research linked to practice ever begins without a motive behind it. That is certainly the case with the research described within this thesis, for in my role as a teacher of Key Skills on an Advanced Vocational Certificate in Education (AVCE) in Travel and Tourism, I have been aware of issues relating to student motivation. That being so, this introductory chapter introduces the context of the research—contemporary youth transitions and social change—before describing briefly the AVCE in Travel and Tourism and the issues that the research is focused upon.

Youth Transitions and Economic and Social Change

Since the 1970s, a decline in the economic need for minimum-aged unqualified school leavers (Carnoy, 1997), combined with successive government policies to expand the further and higher education sectors, has led to increasing numbers of young people remaining in full-time education beyond sixteen. As a result, the transition from education to work now tends to be more complex and takes longer to complete (Wyn and Dwyer, 2000; Furlong and Cartmel, 1997; Roberts, 1995).

For Beck (1992), the more protracted, complex and less predictable transitions of contemporary youth are indicative of a shift to a 'risk society' where individuals are forced to assume greater personal responsibility for their involvement in the labour market and to be accountable for their actions and experiences (Beck, 1992). At the same time, there is strong evidence that social class, race and gender based inequalities of educational opportunity and outcomes are still significant (Hatcher, 1998; Furlong and Cartmel, 1997; Beck, 1992), continuing unequal patterns of participation in further and higher education (Reay *et al*, 2001a; Archer and Hutchings, 2000; Reay, 1998a).

In this context, my research seeks to explicate contemporary processes of educational and occupational decision-making by full-time students studying vocational 'A' Levels in further education. Based upon a literature review (presented in Chapter Two), I conducted an empirical investigation into student decision-making regarding entry to the course and aspirations thereafter. This required a research methodology

that is explained in Chapter Three. The substantive findings and analysis that were gained from this are presented in Chapters Four and Five, whilst Chapter Six offers conclusions to the study.

The Site of the Research

For reasons of access and personal interest, it was decided to conduct the empirical investigations for this study at the researcher's place of work - a large Further and Higher Education (FHE) college in a big, ethnically mixed city in the West Midlands. The College is a specialist provider of courses in Hospitality, Tourism and Care at FE and HE levels, and of Baking, Catering and Hairdressing and Beauty courses at FE levels. FE course provision at the College is provided principally through NVQs, BTEC National Diplomas or Advanced Vocational Certificates of Education (AVCEs). HE course provision takes the form of Foundation Degrees and Honours degrees that are awarded through a local university. The College intake is ethnically diverse. The intake for FE programmes is largely drawn from the city and surrounding area. The intake for HE programmes is drawn from across the UK. There is a significant level of internal FE—HE progression within the College and there is also a considerable number of overseas students enrolled on HE programmes.

The Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education in Travel and Tourism

Advanced Vocational Certificates of Education were introduced in September 2000 with the aim to “...*provide a broad education as a basis for further training, further and higher education or for moving into employment*” (EdExcel, 2003:1) in a way that aims to rival the more academic ‘A’ Levels. The AVCE Double Award, equivalent to two ‘A’ Levels, consists of six compulsory units and six optional units. The aim of the compulsory units of the AVCE is to provide a general overview of the industrial sector with which the particular award is associated (e.g., travel, care etc). The purpose of the optional units is to allow a more specific vocational focus and to facilitate progress to further education, employment or training (EdExcel, 2003:2). Assessment is based upon achievement within externally assessed individual units and by a portfolio of evidence.

The AVCE in Travel and Tourism was first introduced in the case study institution in 2000 as a replacement for the BTEC National Diploma in Travel and Tourism which had run for a number of years previously. The stated aims of the AVCE in Travel and Tourism are to:

- *“stimulate and sustain students’ interest in, and enjoyment of the travel and tourism industry*
- *enable students to gain a knowledge and understanding of travel and tourism appropriate to Level 3 of the national qualification framework*
- *develop student’s (sic) practical skills and enable them to carry out these with due regard for health and safety*
- *develop students’ ability to acquire knowledge by means of practical work*
- *foster imaginative and critical thinking as well as the acquisition of knowledge*
- *develop student’s (sic) understanding of the travel and tourism industry and to recognise the value of the industry to local and national economy (sic)*
- *provide an appropriate course for those who will progress into employment at the end of their study of the subject, as well as laying a secure foundation for those who will continue their studies in this or related subjects” (EdExcel, 2003:10).*

Arising from the aims of the AVCE qualification in general, and of the Travel and Tourism award in particular, the rationale for the choice of the AVCE in Travel and Tourism as the research population for this study was:

- the Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education is a vocational qualification at Curriculum Level 3 (A Level equivalent). The government’s National Learning Targets (NLTs) aim to increase the proportion of 19 year olds achieving a level 3 qualification to 55% by 2004 (DfES, 2002). The Advanced Vocational Certificate in Travel and Tourism is thus an element in the government’s aim to create a ‘Learning Society’ (DfES, 2005) and so fulfils the project’s aim to examine student attitudes towards lifelong learning (as outlined below).
- the students on the Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education in Travel and Tourism are full-time. It was felt reasonable, therefore, to infer that they

were sufficiently motivated to see the relevance and benefit(s) of full-time post-compulsory study. Nonetheless, I also anticipated encountering different types of career planning among the research population which were expected to affect the students' dispositions towards, and aspirations within further and higher education.

- this group of students and their teachers were known to me (and me to them) so that access to them would not be problematic. As I did not teach on the AVCE in Travel and Tourism at the time of the research however, I considered that I would be able to benefit from some social distance, and thus the likelihood of enhanced objectivity.

Personal Motivations and Professional Relevance

I have been employed at the case study college as a lecturer since 1997, teaching on a wide range of courses at both FE and HE levels. As a result of this experience, I became interested in understanding student motivations to study the AVCE, the students' experiences of College life and relationships with the teaching staff, and the effects of these experiences upon their education and job aspirations. These areas of investigation are clearly of importance to my ongoing pedagogical role.

The Research Aims

To guide this study, I developed a research aim and set of objectives as follows:

Aim:

The aim of this research is to make a contribution to theoretical and empirical understandings of post-16 educational experiences and decision-making by means of a case study that moves between and connects macro-, meso- and micro-levels of analysis.

Objectives:

1. To assess the value of, and where necessary to contribute to the appropriate development of, extant theories of cultural, social and financial capital in

explicating full-time further education students' perceptions of and aspirations in post-16 education, training and work by the case study sample.

2. To evaluate the relationships between the prior structural factors of race, class and gender and education and work discourses, and student perceptions and decision making with regard to work, education and training realities and futures.
3. To evaluate the impact of institutional experiences upon the positioning processes and outcomes of students with regard to those discourses relating to further education, higher education, lifelong learning and their own stated ambitions and perceptions of job futures.
4. To offer an account of student views and aspirations that moves between and connects, the micro-level experiences and perceptions of individual students with meso-level institutional culture and macro-level structural factors.

Thesis Title

The title of this thesis — 'Working It Out'— was chosen to suggest two things. Firstly, the use of the continuous form of the verb is intended to embody the active processes of sensemaking and decision-making on the part of the sample students and myself. Secondly, the title suggests that such activities occur within determinate social conditions, that is, there is an 'It' to be worked out. The title thus aims to convey an understanding of individual agency within social structure.

Chapter Two: Social Structures and Processes in Youth Education and Labour Markets

Introduction

This chapter seeks to critically review the literature relating to the structures and processes of youth decision-making with regard to education and labour markets. In doing so, a number of areas are covered before a schematic model of decision-making processes which has been developed to inform this research is provided. The model is presented as a simplified working conceptualisation that links individual situations and experiences to societal structures and developments.

The main subheadings of the chapter, provided below, give an indication of the chapter contents:

- Globalisation, Lifelong Learning and Educational Inequality
- Risk Society and Class Society
- Bourdieu and Class Reproduction
- Rational Action Theory and Educational Decision-Making
- A synthetic framework for an understanding of post-16 educational decision-making, involving:
 - Sensemaking
 - Discourses, Semiosis, Ideology and Hegemony
 - Positioning Theory
 - Social Capital and Institutional Interaction
 - Institutional Habitus
 - Learning Cultures and Vocational Cultures

Globalisation, Lifelong Learning and Educational Inequality

It will be recalled that the context for this study was the apparent contradiction between the claims for a post-class 'Risk Society' and the evidence for persisting

macro-structural inequalities in post-16 education and training (ET). Moreover, these inequalities have persisted despite a significant expansion of the ET system over the past two decades (Savage, 2000). The major rationale for the education and training policies of the current New Labour government, and of previous Conservative administrations, rests upon their construction of the nature of globalisation and of its effects upon the domestic labour market (Hodgson and Spours, 1999). In essence, globalisation refers to the growth of information and telecommunications technologies, the internationalisation of production, increased trans-national capital flows and a growth in a global market for goods, services and labour (Gray, 1998: 55). These changes to the global economy are considered to represent a qualitative shift in the nature of economic activity with concomitantly profound effects for national employment and education policies (Green, 1997: 182). For the New Labour government and previous Conservative administrations, these effects necessitate a 'flexible' (i.e., deregulated) workforce with high levels of skill (2005 White Paper '14-19 Education and Skills': 15).

Indeed, New Labour now see education and training as a central part of economic policy rather than simply as an adjunct to it (Hodgson and Spours, 1999: 6). Only by investing in human capital will the nation produce a labour force with the high levels of skill required to produce the 'value-added' products and services of the 'knowledge economy', an argument made by the 2003 White Paper 'Skills for the 21st Century':

"The global economy has made largely extinct the notion of a 'job for life'. The imperative now is employability for life. Competing on the basis of low wage costs is not an option. We must compete on the basis of our capability for innovation, enterprise, quality and adding greater value through our products and services. All that is dependent on raising our skills game." (p.11)

This belief has found policy expression in an 'organising discourse' of 'lifelong learning' (Hodgson and Spours, 1999: 24). Education and training across the lifespan are considered to promise not only improved economic competitiveness but also greater social equity and cohesion. The power of the discourse of lifelong learning

therefore, appears to lie in its polyvalency. Lifelong learning appeals to ‘economic realist’ concerns as well as to anxieties about social equity and cohesion.

A central aspect of the policies and discourses surrounding lifelong learning is an explicit concern with meeting the assumed skills needs of industry and promoting the values of entrepreneurialism (Avis *et al*, 1996). Such ‘New Vocationalist’ discourses have formed part of the dominant moral economy over the past twenty-five years, and represent an explicit rejection of an older liberal humanist conception of the diffuse benefits of education *per se* which emphasised the development of the individual learner (Moore and Hickox, 1994: 283-4).

At the same time however, a focus upon the supply side alone does not necessarily guarantee sufficient demand for the ‘knowledge workers’ the education and training system is producing (Brown and Hesketh, 2004). Moreover, with regard to equity and cohesion, the language of inclusivity carries with it “...*a deep silence and refusal of social antagonism—gone is a serious understanding of exploitation at the site of waged labour and an interrogation of the way in which these features are accented through the articulation of race, class and gender*” (Avis, 2001:190). In its place is an emphasis upon individual advancement and the discursive allocation of risks onto individuals.

Risk Society and Class Society

The core of the risk thesis is that contemporary society is experiencing a fundamental process of change whereby the traditional social forms of class, the family and accepted gender roles are receding in their power to condition our identities and personal biographies (Beck, 1992: 87). One of the principal drivers of these developments is changes in the labour market and in employment relations. Beck (1992: 149) argues that ‘lifelong full-time work’ on ‘standard contracts’—‘the norm’ until the 1970s—has been eroded by ‘flexibilization’ of production, a process which is drawing increasing numbers of people into the labour market. The result is a loosening of the ties of class, gender and family in a “*social surge of individualization*” (Beck, 1992: 87). The process of change, however, is contradictory and uneven.

To begin with class, Beck does not claim that the objective conditions of class are disappearing; indeed, he allows that the relations of inequality—as evidenced through income differentials and conditions of labour—have remained stable (1992: 88). Instead, individualization is occurring through the weakening of people's subjective sense of class attachment and of its power to influence their lives, for as Beck argues, “...ties to a social class recede mysteriously into the background for the actions of people. Status-based social milieus and lifestyles typical of a class culture lose their lustre” (Beck, 1992: 88). In place of a traditional class-based outlook,

“The tendency is towards the emergence of individualized forms and conditions of existence, which compel people—for the sake of their own material survival—to make themselves the centre of their own planning and conduct of life. Increasingly, everyone has to choose between different options...” (Beck, 1992: 88, my emphasis).

Beck (1992: 89) also sees a process of individualization occurring *within* the family in which family members with different—and often conflicting—ambitions compete for scarce familial resources. Individualization is also influencing perceptions of gender roles both within and outside of the family. The old gendered identities and roles that formed the basis of the industrial society are being undermined by the increasing spread of market forces into what has hitherto been regarded as private family life. Men and women will come to see themselves first and foremost as individuals rather than in terms of traditional gendered expectations (Beck, 1992: 104).

Despite the seductive quality of Beck's thesis, he is not adequately able to explain *how*, under apparent conditions of individualization, structural factors such as social class continue to exert such a powerful influence upon individuals' life chances. The principal criticism of Beck (1992) from which others proceed, is that he draws too stark a division between contemporary 'Risk Society' and the 'Class Society' that preceded it. For Scott (2000) and Mythen (2005) this 'narrative of discontinuity' (Scott, 2000: 34) leads Beck (1992) both to oversimplify past conditions and to miss or gloss over structural continuities. Beck's treatment of the past is predicated upon a depiction of the past in which employment was stable and secure and able to provide

an individual with an identity, status, social contacts and even 'linguistic abilities' (Beck, 1992: 140). Far from being universal however, the portrait of stability and sense of security that Beck (1992) draws of industrial society is one that was principally limited to the middle classes. The working classes have long been exposed to risk and insecurity (see for example Hoggart, 1957).

The second criticism relating to the individualisation thesis—its downplaying of the continuance of traditional structural inequalities—is well made by Mythen (2005: 136) who suggests that Beck's (1992) use of the term individualization is excessively broad (covering cultural experiences, social risks and class identities). This makes it difficult to measure the extent of individualization or its effects. Thus, while the changes produced by a deregulated labour market may induce a more universal (i.e., cross-class) sense of insecurity, it does not follow that all classes will suffer equal exposure to its effects. Mythen (2005: 144) argues that Beck (1992), tends to conflate the subjective perceptions of risk with its objective conditions of distribution.

Despite such valid concerns, there is much in Beck's thesis that is plausible and powerful. At the same time however, there is a need to consider theories that help to explicate patterns of *continuity and class reproduction*. To explain such generational effects, we turn to the work of Pierre Bourdieu.

Bourdieu and Class Reproduction

Beck (1992) is not able to adequately account for the persistence of structural continuities due to a lacuna in his theory in connecting individual micro-level experiences with macro-level structural factors. This means that Beck (1992) is not able to explain the latter (the macro-level) by any reference to the former (the micro-level). The ironic result of this gap in connecting levels of analysis is that although Beck (1992) insists on the importance of individual reflexivity in contemporary social practice, he does not consider to any extent how this would feed into and (re) produce social conditions.

By contrast, Bourdieu seeks to address the relationship between the two levels in a theory of culture that connects individual subjectivities with objective structure

through a continual dialectic in which the individual is both a product and producer of social relations. For my purposes, Bourdieu's representations of individual subjectivity, objective structures and the relationship between them are best considered through a discussion of three of his important theoretical concepts: habitus, field and capital.

The Habitus

The habitus is Bourdieu's attempt to represent the micro-level subjective side of the dialectical relationship. It is a set of deeply embedded dispositions produced through socialisation by which individuals orient themselves to the social world on a more or less subconscious level. Habitus is a *structured* entity in that its dispositions are derived from the individual's position within a wider field of social relations. The material conditions and social relations of the individual's position form a structure of dispositions that tend to anticipate the objective conditions of their position. Thus, on the basis of these dispositions, social practices tend to reproduce the objective structures from which they are derived and so the habitus is also a *structuring* entity. The habitus is, therefore, a dynamic, generative and relational concept:

"The habitus, the durably installed generative principle of regulated improvisations, produces practices which tend to reproduce the regularities immanent in the objective conditions of the production of their generative principle while adjusting to the demands inscribed as objective potentialities in the situation, as defined by the cognitive and motivating structures making up the habitus." (Bourdieu, 1977: 78)

For Bourdieu, the habitus is a 'present past' (1990: 54). Through early experiences and socialisation we develop a set of responses to the social world that function principally at the level of dispositions. These dispositions give us a sense of "*things to do or not to do, things to say or not to say*" (Bourdieu, 1990: 53). As a result of this process of internalisation, or embodiment, it is very difficult for us to think or act outside the formative experiences that formed our habitus. Thus, 'choices' or

‘possibilities’ that do not accord with the dispositions of our habitus will tend to be filtered out in a largely unconscious manner:

“The most improbable practices are therefore excluded, as unthinkable, by a kind of immediate submission to order that inclines agents to make a virtue of necessity, that is, to refuse what is anyway denied and to will the inevitable.” (Bourdieu, 1990: 54)

Where groups of individuals share common or similar material and cultural conditions of existence, we may identify a class habitus and thus class social practices:

“The objective homogenizing of group or class habitus which results from the homogeneity of the conditions of existence is what enables practices to be objectively harmonized without any intentional calculation or conscious reference to a norm and mutually adjusted in the absence of any direct interaction or, a fortiori, explicit co-ordination.” (Bourdieu, 1977: 80, original emphasis)

Field

If habitus represents the subjective side of the dialectical relationship, field is the objective part. Field is defined as, “...an objective space, a structure of objective relations which determines the possible form of interactions and of the representations the interactors can have of them.” (Bourdieu, 1986a: 244) A field is structured because individuals, institutions and class groups all exist in social space in some form of social relation to one another. The habitus will encounter and adjust itself to the demands of the field through what Bourdieu (1990: 66) terms a ‘feel for the game’, that is, through socialisation.

Moreover, for Bourdieu (1986a: 244) a field is often a ‘field of struggles’ between different classes, institutions or individuals over the possession of valued material and symbolic goods (Bourdieu, 1986a: 245). The levels of investment which individuals and classes of individuals are able to bring into the struggles will depend upon the

overall volume and distribution of the different kinds of capital to which they have access. This in turn will define the objective structure of the field (Bourdieu, 1986a: 246). This last observation leads on to a discussion of the last of Bourdieu's theoretical tools to be considered for this present study: capital. For Bourdieu (1986b: 46), capital is something of worth that is unequally distributed and owned by individuals and social groups and which makes the 'games' of society more than mere chance. I will consider the two principal symbolic forms of capital identified and elaborated upon by Bourdieu—cultural and social capital—and then discuss their relationship to economic capital.

Cultural Capital

Cultural capital can exist in three forms. These are: (a) in an *embodied state*, that is, in the form of enduring dispositions of the mind and body; (b) in the *objectified state*, that is, in the form of cultural goods such as books or paintings, and; (c) in the *institutionalized state*, that is, in the form of academic qualifications (Bourdieu, 1986b: 47). The first of these types of cultural capital is of greatest relevance to this present study.

Of these three forms, it is the embodied state that represents cultural capital in its most fundamental and enduring form. The accumulation of cultural capital in this state — the acquisition of a 'cultivated' mind and bodily comportment — presupposes a labour of personal time and effort. Unlike economic capital, embodied cultural capital cannot be transmitted quickly from one generation to the next. Instead, it requires a long period of socialization from very early childhood (Bourdieu, 1986b: 49). This makes cultural capital relatively scarce and so gives it its value within a field, which in turn secures material and symbolic profits for the holder. Moreover, because the transmission of cultural capital takes a more 'disguised' form than that of economic capital, "...it is predisposed to function as symbolic capital, i.e., to be unrecognized as capital and recognized as legitimate competence, as authority exerting an effect of (mis) recognition" (Bourdieu, 1986b: 49).

As the quotation above indicates, Bourdieu (1986b) defines symbolic capital as capital that is not recognized as such. Instead, the cultural products or dispositions of

the dominant classes, and the social and material advantages they derive from these, are taken for granted and pass as a given state of affairs within the field, or fields, in which they were generated. This is an act of ‘misrecognition’ (Bourdieu, 1990) in that agents do not see the deep-rooted processes of social differentiation that are being enacted through the legitimation of what is an *arbitrary* (that is, socially derived, not ‘natural’) set of cultural values and dispositions. Nevertheless, it is also from the process of misrecognition that agents derive a subjective sense of agency and choice in their lives. That is, the ‘feel for the game’ (Bourdieu, 1990:66) puts some ‘choices’ out of bounds while making others seem a natural product of one’s own inclinations or desires.

Social Capital

Bourdieu (1986b: 51) defines social capital as,

“...the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition—or in other words, to membership of a group—which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively owned capital, a ‘credential’ which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word.”

Bourdieu (1986b: 52) emphasises that a network of relationships on which an agent may draw is not a social given but is instead a product of continuous investment strategies, both conscious and unconscious, on the part of an agent or groups of agents. The aim is to convert ‘contingent’ relations (whereby a neighbour or work colleague may give assistance if they feel so inclined) into ones “...*that are at once necessary and elective, implying durable obligations subjectively felt (feelings of gratitude, respect, friendship etc.) or institutionally guaranteed (rights)*” (Bourdieu, 1986b: 52). This process is advanced through acts of symbolic and material exchange, the nature of which will both reproduce the group and, importantly, act to limit its membership. For Bourdieu (1986b) therefore, social capital is simultaneously an inclusionary and exclusionary force within the field of struggles. Moreover, the

volume of social capital that is available to an agent, and on which they may draw, is relative to the size of the network that can be mobilized, and on the levels of cultural and economic capital that each of the agents within the network possess in their own right (Bourdieu, 1986b: 51).

Cultural, Social and Economic Capital

Bourdieu (1986b: 54) argues that economic capital lies at the root of both cultural and social capital, although the relationship between the types of capital is complex. Economic capital is firstly implicated in cultural and social capital by virtue of the long period of time and the amount of investment required for successful transmission. Indeed, for Bourdieu (1986b: 49), this economic investment constitutes the most powerful factor in the efficacy of cultural capital (and, to a lesser extent, social capital) since it necessarily excludes social agents who lack sufficient economic resources for such lengthy investment processes.

Economic capital is secondly implicated in the symbolic forms of capital in the material advantages and gains that agents derive through the successful acquisition and deployment of the symbolic forms of capital within the social field. Consequently, the functional relationship between economic capital and the symbolic forms of capital is very close. This leads Bourdieu (1986b: 54) to argue that the symbolic forms of capital are in fact disguised forms of economic capital, although they cannot actually be entirely reduced to that definition. Moreover, Bourdieu (1986b: 55) argues that as more overt class reproduction strategies become less acceptable, so the symbolic strategies increase in importance.

The value of the Bourdieusian framework to this study

Bourdieu's conceptual tools are able to offer this study three things. Firstly, Bourdieu's insistence upon the principally pre-reflexive, unconscious nature of our knowledge of, and action in and upon, the social world, serves as a powerful corrective to Beck's (1992) reflexive modernization thesis (Adkins, 2004; McNay, 1999). Bourdieu's insistence on the power of history, both personal and collective, to condition (constrain or promote) an agent's present and future social practices in a

way that is largely beyond discursive consciousness, offers a way of understanding the persistence of structural inequalities with regard to post-16 education and training in the face of apparent change in youth transitions. By contrast, whilst Beck (1992) sees a reflexive weakening of agents' attachment to class, gender norms and to family, he appears to define this exclusively in terms of an overt consciousness, making him less able to account for the durability of much social practice.

Secondly, Bourdieu offers a means of understanding the ways in which inequalities can be produced and re-produced through cultural processes as well as material ones and, crucially, how the former acts as a disguise for the latter (Lawler, 2004: 113). In terms of the field of education for example, the division between 'vocational' and 'academic' education may be seen as an arbitrary social distinction (that has material effects), as much as a curricular one. Furthermore, the distinctive contribution that Bourdieu makes with cultural capital is through the concept of misrecognition, in which the principle of capital comes to be represented as its opposite. Consequently "*Power valorizes culture and culture performs the service of disguising and legitimating power*" (Moore, 2004: 448).

Finally, the nature of the habitus as both a set of individual *and* collective dispositions offers a way of connecting the micro-level experiences of social actors with macro-level structural relations. This has theoretical and methodological implications for the way in which we might conceive of a research study, thus, "*Habitus, then, is a means of viewing structure as occurring within small-scale interactions and activity within large-scale settings*" (Reay, 2004:439).

While Beck (1992) thus offers this study an explanatory account of *change* within contemporary youth transitions, Bourdieu offers the potential to address the question of *continuities*. At the same time, however, there are limits to the explanatory power of Bourdieu's conceptual tools, particularly with regard to gender, race and reflexivity.

The limits of the Bourdieusian framework with regard to gender, race and reflexivity

From Bourdieu's definition of class, it is apparent that he sees gender and ethnicity as co-determinants of class:

"[a] class or class fraction is defined not only by its position in the relations of production, as identified through indices such as occupation, income or even educational level, but also by a certain sex-ratio, a certain distribution in geographical space (which is never socially neutral) and by a whole set of subsidiary characteristics which may function, in the form of tacit requirements, as real principles of selection or exclusion without ever being formally stated (this is the case with ethnic origin and sex) (Bourdieu, 1986a: 102).

As Sayer (2005: 82) notes, the problem with Bourdieu's definition of class is his reduction of gender and ethnicity to the role of secondary modifiers of class while economic class is given the principle contextualising role. This ignores gender and ethnicity as sources of domination and subordination in their own right. With regard to gender for example, Skeggs (2004a: 24) argues that some forms of masculinity (within a classed hierarchy) function as symbolic capital and thus as a form of domination. By contrast Skeggs (2004a) argues, women are rarely able to accrue symbolic capital from femininity except when their femininity is legitimated by men and is attached to other forms of power.

A similar argument may be advanced with regard to ethnicity, for there is a silence around whiteness as a racialised identity to the extent that 'White' is seen simply as normative and thus remains unquestioned (Mason, 2000, 2nd edn; Bhavnani *et al*, 2005). The invisibility and normativity of whiteness (its 'misrecognition' in Bourdieusian terms) mean that it is necessarily implicated in social and intersubjective power relations (Gunaratnam, 2005: 112). In Bourdieusian terms, a "White" skin colour, in a society where whiteness is the norm, is a source of symbolic capital, with the potential for conversion into material capital.

A second related point with regard to Bourdieu's treatment of gender and race is that by reducing these social categories to modifiers of economic class, he appears to construct them as 'fixed' identities that social agents simply inhabit in a largely unreflexive manner. In respect of femininity, Skeggs (2004a) argues convincingly that this is simply not the case. Citing her earlier ethnographic study of white working class women (Skeggs, 1997) Skeggs is able to show that women can and do 'enact' gender roles — they resist, re-work or adapt dominant gendered and classed values (Skeggs, 2004a: 25). Similarly with regard to race, it has been argued that identities are not fixed but are fluid and relational, subject to shifts dependent upon time, place or context (Shain, 2000, 2003).

These criticisms do not in themselves diminish the value of the concepts of habitus and capital for an understanding of the advantages and inequalities associated with race and gender. As Reay (2004: 436) points out, the habitus is principally a means of analysing cultural processes of domination and subordination that are ingrained in everyday interaction. As such, it can be applied to the analysis of gender and race as well as economic class. What this means however, as Skeggs (2004a: 24) insists in relation to gender (but which applies equally well to race), is that an understanding of misrecognition is not sufficient by itself — gender and race require careful empirical attention if we are to understand the mechanisms by which these social divisions are created and sustained.

In addition to these problems connected to race and gender within the Bourdieusian scheme, further problems arise in relation to the place of reflection and deliberation. As Adkins (2004: 204) notes, Bourdieu appears to dichotomise clearly between reflexivity, which he associates with conscious thinking and action, and the more usual habitual forms of thinking and action that are unconscious and embodied. For Bourdieu moreover, the unconscious complicity between habitus and field is so strong that reflective, deliberative action may only emerge when a disjunction occurs between habitus and field as, for example, in times of crisis (Bourdieu, 1992: 130). For some commentators (see Sayer, 2005; Adkins, 2004; Reay, 2004), this focus upon unconscious thought and habituated action ignores the extent to which much of everyday life is patterned by what may be termed mundane reflexivities. These reflexivities, or 'internal conversations' (Sayer, 2005: 29), range from day-dreaming

to concentrated reflection upon problems. For social scientists to ignore an agent's power to reflect is to marginalise the life of the mind in others (Sayer, 2005: 29).

Bourdieu's emphasis, therefore, has been upon an account of order, structure and reproduction within social relations, and not of transformation (Skeggs, 2004a; Nash, 2003:46). Thus, although Bourdieu's conceptual tools are of value to this study, they are not in themselves, sufficient. It was considered necessary therefore, to consider the explanatory power of Rational Action Theory (RAT) with regard to educational decision-making.

Rational Action Theory and Educational Decision-Making

In an important paper, Goldthorpe (1996) applies what he terms a 'weak version' of Rational Action Theory (RAT) to the explanation of persisting class differentials in educational attainment. His notion of rationality is 'weak' in that:

"I would recognise that departures from the standard of 'perfect' rationality are very frequent. I make no assumption that actors are always entirely clear about their goals, are always aware of the optimal means of pursuing them, or in the end do always follow the course of action that they know to be rational".

(1996: 485)

What identifies his approach as being grounded in RAT however, is the supposition that

"...the tendency of actors to act rationally in the circumstances that prevail is the common factor influencing them—even if relatively weak—while propensities to depart from rationality operate randomly in different ways. The law of 'large numbers' will then ensure that it is the rational tendency that dominates"

(1996: 485-6, original emphasis)

For Goldthorpe (1996: 486) the prime focus of RAT is upon how actors come to choose particular courses of action in pursuit of their goals. In the context of a class analysis, he maintains that it is essential to show (a) how actors' goals are intelligible in relation to the class position they hold, and; (b) how their actions are conditioned by the distribution of resources, opportunities and constraints that the class structure as a whole entails. Class position in this account is characterised in terms of employment through status (employer versus employee) and regulation ('labour contract' versus 'service relationship') (Goldthorpe, 1996: 486).

Goldthorpe (1996: 489) claims that culturalist arguments (such as those of Bourdieu) which assume different class values and aspirations are not able to offer any convincing explanation for the persistence of class differentials in educational attainment. Instead, Goldthorpe (1996: 489) contends that it is simpler to assume that there is no such systematic variation and that all classes are equal in their level of aspiration. Goldthorpe therefore (1996: 489) proposes a 'positional' theory of aspirations. Positionality is explained by the observation that in pursuing any given goal from different class origins, different 'social distances' will have to be traversed that will entail differing evaluations of the probable financial costs and benefits of different opportunities and constraints (Goldthorpe, 1996: 490).

It is as young people reach the various transitions or branching points of the educational system, that considerations arising from class origins and envisaged destinations – educational and in turn occupational – become crucial. Stratification of educational attainment results from the parents and children of the less advantaged classes tending to view the more ambitious options less favourably, since the less advantaged the class positions from which they are viewed, the greater the relative level of aspiration they entail (Goldthorpe, 1996: 491).

Goldthorpe (1996: 491) argues that with expansion of the UK education system, more young people in total will stay on in education after sixteen. Despite this, whilst the *general* costs and benefits of ambitious options have changed so as to encourage increased take up, little concurrent change has occurred in the cost benefit balances or *relativities* between classes (Goldthorpe, 1996: 492). It is this imbalance that explains the persistence of class differentials in post-16 educational attainment.

Goldthorpe's application of RAT is of some value to this study but, as with the Bourdieusian framework, it too has its limits as an explanatory account of post-16 educational decision-making. I first wish to consider some of the problems for this study that arise from the RAT analysis of Goldthorpe and then to highlight its value.

Criticisms of the RAT of Goldthorpe

Devine (1998) makes a number of criticisms with which I would concur. To begin with, Goldthorpe's (1996) definition of class is criticised as being excessively narrow by ignoring economic resources across generations or the accumulation of resources from outside the labour market (1998: 30). Devine (1998: 30) concludes that income alone cannot explain the probability of taking a particular course of action or shape perceptions of cost benefit. Devine (1998: 30-31) also notes Goldthorpe's (1996) dismissal of cultural and social resources, arguing that it is one thing to identify the shortcomings of cultural theories of class, and another to deny altogether the importance of culture or norms in their reproduction (1998: 31).

A second set of criticisms by Devine (1998) relate to the epistemological assumptions of RAT. By focussing on what may be regarded as a narrowly economic view of social action, and in disregarding normative determinants, Devine (1998: 34) considers that Goldthorpe (1996) fails to distinguish between 'irrational' action and 'non-rational' action. The assumption that *all* decisions are made consciously and reflexively on the basis of information is problematic, as information is frequently incomplete, often confusing, and rarely the only motivating factor in making a decision (Devine, 1998: 35). Finally, as both Scott (1996: 510) and Devine (1998: 35) argue, people who adhere to certain norms or believe in certain principles may be acting quite rationally in conformance with their accepted social norms, even if the effect is to limit ambitions or social mobility.

The value of RAT to this study

Despite the limitations identified above, RAT is able to offer two things which make it of value. Firstly, RAT foregrounds conscious deliberative decision-making to an extent that is not possible when working exclusively within a Bourdieusian

framework of analysis. I do not however, necessarily equate ‘conscious deliberative’ decision-making with ‘rational’ decision-making in Goldthorpe’s (1996) sense of ‘rational’. Rather, I fully accept the power of cultural and social norms to condition perspectives and decision-making outcomes. Furthermore, I also accept that much social practice is of an habitual pre-reflexive nature. What is at stake is not the rationality of an agent’s perspectives or decision-making, but instead an acceptance that they *sometimes* think and act in a conscious and reflective manner upon their circumstances and future – although they may not always do so as they work within accepted cultural and social norms that prevail within their socio-cultural context. This is an insight that is to be gained from RAT, and which is not possible within an exclusively Bourdieusian framework.

Indeed, much of the argument criticising the inability of the habitus to account for deliberative decision-making is to be found in the discussion of ‘pragmatic rationality’ by Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997). As with this present study, Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997) view the habitus as a powerful conceptual tool for an understanding of youth career decision-making and their theory of ‘careership’. Despite this, they too saw the need to go beyond Bourdieu, and modified the concept of the habitus in two important ways.

Firstly, Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997:34) assert that Bourdieu emphasises the role of practical consciousness (a tacit knowledge of the social world) in the habitus at the expense of a consideration of discursive consciousness (what we are able to articulate to ourselves and others), when both are required. Secondly, Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997:34) propose the concept of ‘schemata’—the conceptual structures that serve as tools for understanding experiences—as a mechanism by which we may understand how the habitus can change. When schemata are challenged by the accretion of experience or by unusual events, knowledge may move from a practical form of consciousness into a more discursive and deliberative mode (Hodkinson and Sparkes, 1997:34). By this means, an individual’s habitus is capable of change as a result of their reflection upon their circumstances. Decision-making, consequently, is pragmatically rational as it is embedded normally within the cultural and social norms that are characteristic of the individual’s habitus, though more discursive and reflective processes can also inform decision-making if their schemata is disturbed.

The second insight gained from Goldthorpe (1996) relates to the importance of 'objective' economic class in decision-making processes. Goldthorpe (1996) highlights the importance of income differentials in a way that, again, is not possible by working exclusively within a Bourdieusian framework. While Bourdieu uses the terms 'cultural' and 'economic' separately, he appears to see culture and economy as constituting a form of fused totality in which the one can not be separated from the other (Devine and Savage, 2005:14). This form of analysis is not sufficient to 'grasp the totality of social class' (Crompton and Scott, 2005:192). Rather, economic class, ethnicity and gender are analytically separable social divisions with their own effects upon decision-making. In this respect, this study adopts a 'dual systems' approach to culture and the economy (Crompton and Scott, 2005:192). Following this approach, economic activities are to be seen as 'culturally inflected' (Ray and Sayer, 1999:6) but still remain separate from cultural activities *per se*. By going beyond Bourdieu and accepting Goldthorpe's (1996) insistence upon the importance of economic capital, this study is able to consider post-16 educational decision-making in the context of both economic and cultural resources, and to evaluate the relationship between them.

Race, Class and Gender and the Intersectionality Model

The dual systems approach to culture and the economy is the basis of what Anthias (2005:32) terms the intersectionality model of race, class and gender. This model represents the framework for the ontological status of these social divisions and the relationships between them. The model is discussed in detail in Chapter Six, especially in relationship to a dual systems understanding of culture and economy, but as the intersectionality model is relevant for the subsequent analysis of the findings presented in chapters four and five, it is appropriate to give a brief account of it here.

The position of this study is that race, class and gender are analytically separable social entities, yet interconnecting in the sense that the cultural attributions attached to them represent interlocking forms of inequality and subordination within individuals and groups of individuals (Anthias, 2005:36). Consequently, race, class and gender cannot simply be taken as unproblematically constituted categories (Anthias 1998), for in addition to an examination of individuals' social *positions* (in terms of social, cultural and economic resources), it is necessary also to consider related processes of

social *positioning*, that is, how individuals come to be ‘raced’, ‘classed’ and ‘gendered’ in relation to such processes (Anthias, 2005:36). Whilst such positioning processes may be mutually reinforcing in terms of hierarchical outcomes, their effects can also be uneven and contradictory in the sense that one social location (for example, gender) may place individuals in a position of relative dominance while another (class) may position them within a subordinate position (Anthias, 2005:37).

A synthetic framework for an understanding of post-16 educational decision-making

So far, I have attempted to synthesise a Bourdieusian culturalist stance with elements of Goldthorpe’s (1996) version of RAT in order to arrive at a framework for an understanding of the conditions for post-16 educational decision-making. This attempt is consistent with Sibeon’s (2004: 27) call for a ‘relatively cumulative’ approach towards the development of sociological theory and the construction of empirical knowledge. Moreover, by synthesising the useful elements of different schools of thought, it is possible to avoid the dangers of *reductionism*, that is, a theory that, “...illegitimately attempts to reduce the complexities of social life to a single, unifying principle of explanation or analytical prime mover” (Sibeon, 2004: 2).

A synthesis of Bourdieusian culturalism and RAT however, is not by itself sufficient as an explanatory account of educational decision-making. Such an explanation requires a “*dialectic of habitus, institution and rational action*” (Hatcher, 1998: 21, my emphasis) in order to more clearly explain the scenarios of educational choice. Hatcher argues that,

“The micro options taken by the pupil in the fine grain of interaction with the teacher accumulate within individual histories to sediment into patterns of class inequality and to shape decisions at institutional transition points. The importance of conceptualising rational action in this way is that choices become not one-off events but a recursive process in which account can be taken of the effects of each choice on both the institutional context

and, through a feedback loop, the individual affecting subsequent choices” (Hatcher, 1998: 21-2)

I believe that Hatcher (1998) makes two very pertinent points for this study. He highlights the importance of firstly *routine*, and secondly *institutional interaction* for educational experiences and subsequent decision-making. Consequently, in order to more fully elaborate the theoretical framework for this study, it is necessary to consider these two aspects in some detail. To consider the nature of routine, it is necessary to examine the social *processes* by which agents make sense of their social world and within which they position themselves. This requires a critical discussion of literature related to sensemaking; discourses; semiosis; ideology; hegemony; and positioning theory. The more specific consideration of institutional interaction involves the concept of ‘institutional habitus’.

Sensemaking

Whilst Weick’s (1995) work on ‘sensemaking’, from which this discussion is drawn, is based in organization theory, the basic tenets of his work may profitably be applied to the present research. For Weick, sensemaking refers to “...*reality as an ongoing accomplishment that takes form when people make retrospective sense of the situations in which they find themselves and their creations*” (1995: 15). Weick identifies a number of salient characteristics of sensemaking.

Firstly, the sense a person makes of a situation is grounded in the identity, or identities they develop of themselves, which are products of interaction across a range of situations (Weick, 1995: 20). This conception of identity clearly complements that of Bourdieu but appears to go further in seeing identity as essentially fluid and protean. This is apparent in Weick’s (1995: 24) reference to the different ‘selves’ that an agent may enact. It may be supposed that young people enact and embody different identities under different circumstances, e.g., with friends, parents or at school/college. Furthermore, some identities will be of greater importance to the young person than others.

Sensemaking is also “*enactive of sensible environments*” (Weick, 1995: 30). By taking action, (saying, deciding, doing) we contribute to the creation of our own environments and so create the materials that become the constraints and opportunities we face (Weick, 1995: 31). Causality is not one-way however, but a continuous dynamic dialectical relationship between the situation (*environment and encounters*) and an individual’s actions. Behaviour has to be conceived as a *process* in which actions are only a moment in that process. At the same time, “*To cope with pure duration, people create breaks in the stream and impose categories on those portions that are set apart*” (Weick, 1995: 35).

Weick (1995) is again able to offer a potentially more nuanced characterisation of social practice than that available from Bourdieu alone. Weick (1995:37) emphasises that ‘creation’ (i.e., ‘doing things’) is not the only possible outcome of action; humans are capable of reflection and interpretation of events, perhaps causing them to abandon or postpone action. As he notes, “*Abbreviated actions, constructed in imagination and indicated solely to oneself, can also be made meaningful*” (Weick, 1995: 37). This is a valuable insight to this study: what does not occur can be as significant as what does. If we again consider this insight in relation to the focus of this study, it is apparent that, for example, adverse perceptions of alternative post-16 options that the case study students *may* have chosen (instead of the AVCE in Travel and Tourism) may be as significant to their futures as their eventual choice.

Sensemaking also relies on ‘extracted cues’, defined as, “*...simple, familiar structures that are seeds from which people develop a larger sense of what may be happening*” (Weick, 1995: 50). Extracted cues are points of reference within our environment from which we get a sense of the larger whole from which they are drawn. By developing action based upon cues (however extracted) a person ‘makes their own reality’ in a cyclical process,

“Because extracted cues are crucial for their capacity to evoke action, processes of sensemaking tend to be forgiving. Almost any point of reference will do, because it stimulates a cognitive structure that then leads people to act with more intensity, which

then creates a material order in place of a presumed order...”
(Weick, 1995: 54).

At the same time, Weick suggests that the accuracy of the perceptions from extracted cues is of less importance ontologically than their plausibility, coherence and reasonableness (1995: 61). We make the best of the information we have and those cues that appear supportive of our favoured course of action will generally be preferred over those that would seem to halt or hinder it (1995: 60).

These characteristics of sensemaking provide a means to conceptualise the processes by which agents come to position themselves in relation to certain pre-existing discourses (e.g., those relating to FE, HE and Lifelong Learning), and the practices they enact (e.g., decision-making). Weick (1995) therefore complements and develops a Bourdieusian understanding of the social processes of sensemaking. Our awareness of social reality is always partial due to the complex and mutable nature of that reality. Thus, we often act on the basis of received understandings gained from different sources (i.e., significant others such as peers, family or teachers). These will then be given greater or lesser credence depending on the source.

Discourses, Semiosis, Ideology and Hegemony

For Weick (1995), the essence of sensemaking is rooted in language, a position also taken by Gee (1999: 11) who notes that human beings,

“ Continually and actively build and rebuild our worlds not just through language, but through language used in tandem with actions, interactions, non-linguistic symbol systems, objects, tools, technologies, and distinctive ways of thinking, valuing, feeling and believing. Sometimes what we build is quite similar to what we have built before; sometimes it is not. But language-in-action is always and everywhere an active building process.”

Gee's reference to 'non-linguistic symbol systems' also makes clear that meaning may be derived from more than language alone. Fairclough (2001) utilises the term

semiosis to mean “...all forms of meaning making—visual images, body language, as well as language” (2001: 122). Semiosis is thus “...an irreducible part of material social processes” (2001: 122) and therefore features in representations of social practices. To give an example from this study, a teacher (as a social actor in the social practice of teaching) will form a ‘reflexive’ representation of teaching in general, as well as their own teaching. The semiotic element draws upon discourse, a term that I would distinguish from semiosis as being restricted to the production of meaning through language (Wetherell *et al*, 2001: 3). Discourses are “...diverse representations of social life which are inherently positioned—differently positioned social actors ‘see’ and represent social life in different ways, different discourses.” (Fairclough, 2001: 123).

Fairclough (2001: 124) argues further that networked social practices constitute a social order, for example that of education in a particular society at a particular time. The semiotic aspect of a social order is termed an ‘order of discourse’, that is, the way diverse genres (distinctive ways of producing social life, e.g., conversations, interviews, advertisements) and discourses are networked and interlaced together. Because of their association with dominant groups, some discourses and genres will gain dominance over others and become accepted as ‘mainstream’. Where this happens, a particular discourse becomes “...part of the legitimising common sense which sustains relations of domination” (Fairclough, 2001: 124) and thus becomes hegemonic.

For Williams (1977), hegemony offers a more overarching view of the construction of social processes than ideology does alone. Ideology is “...a relatively formal and articulated system of meanings, values, and beliefs, of a kind that can be abstracted as a ‘world-view’ or a ‘class outlook’ (1977: 109). Hegemony by contrast, does not limit itself to the manifest and articulate beliefs and values which a dominant class develops and attempts to impose upon other classes, but instead articulates the relations of domination and subordination as a “practical consciousness” (Williams, 1977: 110). Hegemony refers to a sense of the pervasiveness of particular relations of domination and subordination, for,

“It is a whole body of practices and expectations, over the whole of living: our senses and assignments of energy, our shaping perceptions of ourselves and our world. It is a lived system of meanings and values—constitutive and constituting—which as they are experienced as practices appear as reciprocally confirming. It thus constitutes a sense of reality for most people in the society, a sense of absolute because experienced reality beyond which it is very difficult for most members of the society to move, in most areas of their lives.” (Williams, 1977: 110)

Williams’ (1977) concept of hegemony is relevant to this study as it allows individual agents to experience a degree of free will in their everyday practices. Thus, it may be anticipated that individual students in the case study will *assume* a sense of agentic control in relation to their views on further and higher education, lifelong learning, the labour market and their everyday practices within those discourses. The case study students *do* have views on the world and *do* act upon those views. To deny this would be to deny human individuality and bring into question the value of any research enterprise that seeks to gain people’s views of their social world, despite an understanding that such views are socially constructed from a range of sources and influences (e.g. families).

Moreover, hegemony also constitutes the conditions under which people act. The social conditions under which individuals live not only set limits but also exert pressures towards thinking and behaving in particular ways. Limits constitute a ‘negative determination’ while pressures are a ‘positive determination’ (Williams, 1977: 87). Obviously, there is a complex relation between the two that has to be determined empirically, for what is experienced as a form of pressure may lead an individual (or groups of individuals) to act in a way which serves to maintain a particular social mode and thus, perhaps, make sensible the limits.

Williams’ (1977: 87) distinction has been operationalised in my research by the categorisation of ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors as they relate to the case study students. Thus, a push factor would correspond to a pressure (i.e. pursuing post-16 education due to a lack of appealing employment opportunities) while a ‘pull’ factor would

correspond to a limit (i.e. the choice of the vocational route over the academic one due to socio-culturally based preferences). Throughout my research, I have taken the working assumption that an individual's post-16 educational decision making will be a complex amalgam of such push and pull factors, not all of them conscious.

Positioning Theory

Positioning theory represents the final epistemological link connecting individual subjectivities and interactions to discourses. The principle premise of positioning theory is that persons are 'constituted' by the interplay between their structural roles and positions and the discourses plausibly available to them in ways that both constrain and enable what can be thought, said and done. Ontologically, it is through language—verbal but also non-verbal—that people 'position' themselves or are assigned positions. Harre and van Langenhove (1999: 1) define a position as:

“...a complex cluster of generic personal attributes, structured in various ways, which impinges on the possibilities of interpersonal, intergroup and even intrapersonal action through some assignment of such rights, duties and obligations to an individual as are sustained by the cluster.”

A position is arrived at, however, through dynamic interaction with others, making positions relational in nature. The relational nature of a position means that a person's identity may be categorised in terms of “self1” and a repertoire of “personas” (Harre and van Langenhove 1999: 7). Self1 is,

“...the self of personal identity, which is experienced as the continuity of one's point of view in the world of objects in space and time. This is usually coupled with one's sense of personal agency, in that one takes oneself as acting from that very same point.” (Harre and van Langenhove 1999: 7).

Personas, by contrast, are, *“...the selves that are publicly presented in the episodes of interpersonal interaction in the everyday world, the coherent clusters of traits...”*

(Harre and van Langenhove 1999: 7). A persona may be enacted in order to conform to the perceived requirements of a social or cultural stereotype or in conformance with the demands of a particular social situation or institution. It follows, therefore, that the same individual (self1) may enact one or more personas. While self1 is conceptualised as a relatively singular, coherent, reflexive whole that does not depend for its existence upon the recognition and acceptance of others, personas are contingent upon situational requirements. Van Langenhove and Harre (1999: 17) recognise that the ability to deliberately position oneself and to position others is unequally distributed in society. Despite this, positioning theory holds open at least the notional possibility of agentic action. The value to this study of positioning theory, therefore, is that it provides an analytic tool which can be used to describe and interrogate the multiple relations and interactive involvements that comprise everyday experiential realities.

Taken together, the three aspects of social process that I have considered - sensemaking; discourses, semiosis, ideology and hegemony; positioning theory - offer a theoretical framework by which to connect individual subjectivities and practice with macro-level structural realities through language and other meaning systems. As such, they complement the understandings derived from Bourdieu and RAT. To gain a fuller understanding of youth educational decision-making however, it is necessary to consider institutional habitus within institutional interaction.

Social Capital and Institutional Interaction

Before considering the value of the concept of institutional habitus as a means to explore and account for the importance of institutional interactions in the educational experiences and decision-making of young people, it is necessary to consider the theories of social capital developed by Raffo and Reeves (2000) and Stanton-Salazar (1997), both of which are valuable to this study. In considering these theories, I will be able to articulate my understanding of institutional habitus within the wider framework of social capital.

Raffo and Reeves (2000: 148) elaborate the concept of 'individualised systems of social capital' which they define as, "*a dynamic, social, spatially, culturally,*

temporally and economically embedded group, network or constellation of social relations, which has the young person at the core of the constellation and which produces opportunities for authentic learning". Whilst derived from an understanding of habitus, their approach focuses upon how young people develop an informal and implicit practical knowledge through their contact with a 'constellation' (Raffo and Reeves, 2000: 151) of people and then use this knowledge in everyday task situations. This concept of social capital is an 'individualised' one in the sense that:

".....Very different individuals may be co-joined within the constellation, some of whom share the common world of the individual, and who may have strong ties with that individual, but others whose experiences and world view may be distinctly different, where weak ties may have been established through a specific 'consensual moment' within a given set of circumstances, experiences and contexts" (Raffo and Reeves, 2000: 152).

An individual's network of relations may be marked simultaneously by a strong degree of homogeneity (shared norms and expectations) but also by some level of heterogeneity. The individualised nature of an agent's social capital may lead to differently evolving habituses even for young people from similar backgrounds (Raffo and Reeves, 2000: 152).

It is here therefore, that the approach of Raffo and Reeves (2000) departs from that of Bourdieu who, it will be recalled, emphasises the homogeneity of group or class habitus because of the homogeneity of the conditions of existence. Instead, the individualised system of social capital of Raffo and Reeves (2000) is able to accommodate some of the insights offered by Beck's (1992) reflexive modernisation thesis by allowing for accountable variation 'caused' by other factors such as gender, race and institutional habitus.

Raffo and Reeves (2000) posit a four-fold typology of individualised systems of social capital: weak, strong, changing and fluid. It is the third type – fluid – which is the one that most distances their concept of social capital from that of Bourdieu and which I wish to consider here. In fluid systems, individual young people engage in a

range of social relations with “*authentic and culturally appropriate significant others*” (Raffo and Reeves, 2000: 153). This offers the individual the potential for strategic action about life choices in which agencies and actors external to the individual’s cultural and spatial locale inhere. Raffo and Reeves (2003: 165) argue that it is this type of capital which offers young people, particularly those of socio-economically disadvantaged classes, the best chances of negotiating the challenges of contemporary youth transitions.

Stanton-Salazar’s (1997) concept of social capital reflects that of Raffo and Reeves (2000) in that it is rooted in a Bourdieusian concern with the power of structural constraints but also sees a place for strategic agentic action on the part of individuals. As with Raffo and Reeves (2000), his focus of study is on the place of ‘low-status’ youth within a society demarcated by class, gender and race. His concept of social capital however, is narrower than that of Raffo and Reeves (2000) in that it pertains more specifically to what he sees as the problematic relations between such ‘low-status’ youth—identified within his study as ‘African American and Latino youth from economically disenfranchised urban communities’ (Stanton-Salazar, 1997: 1)—and ‘significant others’ within the context of schools and other educational settings.

Stanton-Salazar (1997: 5) develops a ‘network analytic model’ of socialisation and youth development which he claims allows him to both directly address structural constraints on young people’s access to institutional privileges and resources, and also to consider the roles of individual and cultural agency. His conceptual framework is built around the frameworks of social capital and institutional support and his principle thesis is summarised in two statements:

“First, for all children and youths, healthy human development, general well-being and school success, and economic and social integration in society depend upon regular and unobstructed opportunities for constructing instrumental relations with institutional agents across key social spheres and institutional domains dispersed throughout society....Second, for low-status children and youth, the development of supportive relations with

institutional agents outside the immediate kinship unit is systematically problematic” (Stanton-Salazar, 1997: 6).

Stanton-Salazar (1997: 6) defines institutional agents as “ *those individuals who have the capacity and commitment to transmit directly, or negotiate the transmission of, institutional resources and opportunities*”. This term includes such people as teachers and others in related professions who will have institutionally-based relations with young people. It is argued however, that personal and reliable access to committed institutional agents is skewed towards the middle classes (Stanton-Salazar, 1997 :7). For Stanton-Salazar, therefore, the term social capital is “*reserved for instrumental or supportive relationships with institutional agents*” (1997: 7).

Stanton-Salazar (1997) conceptualises the differences between the different socio-cultural worlds which minority ethnic youth encounter as ‘borders’, the function of which is to “*alert people to the rules and requirements necessary for effective participation within the respective world or setting*” (1997: 22). Borders may be neutral, stressful or obstructive, the most significant borders being socio-cultural; socio-economic; linguistic; and structural (Stanton-Salazar, 1997: 24). Socio-cultural barriers are encountered when “*...the cultural components in one world (e.g., the home, the ethnic community) are viewed as less important than in another, or worse yet, when they are denigrated or tacitly cast as inferior*” (Stanton-Salazar, 1997: 24). Socio-economic barriers relate to the problems associated with inadequate economic resources that impinge upon full participation in institutional life. For Stanton-Salazar (1997: 24), linguistic barriers refer to institutional orientations towards monolingualism. Finally, structural barriers are conceived of as features of an educational institution that work to impede full academic and social participation by students, examples of which are inadequate material resources or levels of staff (Stanton-Salazar, 1997: 24).

Stanton-Salazar (1997: 25) argues that in order to cross these barriers, working-class minority ethnic youth will require strong supportive ties with protective agents although ultimately, consistent access to institutional resources and opportunities appears dependent on effective participation in the dominant culture. At the same time, institutional constraints and barriers are never totally deterministic: many

minority youth *do* find ways of acquiring social capital (Stanton-Salazar, 1997: 25). One example might be the development of a ‘bi-cultural network orientation’ which is defined as:

“...a consciousness that facilitates the crossing of cultural borders and the overcoming of institutional barriers, and thereby facilitates entrée into multiple community and institutional settings where diversified social capital can be generated and converted by way of instrumental actions” (Stanton-Salazar, 1997: 25).

This requires considerable coping skills for working class minority youth and a “*network orientation of almost hyper rationality and of extraordinary psychic fortitude*” (1997: 27). Ultimately however, Stanton-Salazar (1997) sees the success of some working class minority youth in negotiating multiple worlds as simply an individual solution, often with long-term psychological consequences. In his view, most working class minority youth will reject an assimilationist network-orientated model, no matter how much institutional support is given (1997 :33-4).

The arguments of Raffo and Reeves (2000) nor Stanton-Salazar (1997) are not without problems however. Raffo and Reeves (2000) for example, are not clear on *how* different individualised systems of social capital can conduce to very different world views among young people of “*same or similar objective exogenous conditions*” (2000: 152). Meanwhile, Stanton-Salazar (1997) paints a somewhat over-deterministic picture of barriers facing ‘low-status’ youth, with his analysis leaning firmly towards structural constraints. Nevertheless, despite these shortcomings, both analyses clearly point towards the importance of ties with ‘institutional agents’ and ‘significant others’ in the evolution of the habituses of individuals and groups of individuals. Consequently, they offer a convincing argument for a study of the institutional habitus as a contributing explanatory concept.

Institutional Habitus

The term ‘habitus’ is clearly derived from Bourdieu. It is not clear, however, whether Bourdieu himself believed that a habitus could be an attribute of an institution, as

understood in the sense of ‘organisation’—for example, a school or college (Smith, 2003: 464). This has not stopped other people from appropriating the concept however, as Reay *et al* (2001b) have adopted the term institutional habitus for “...*the impact of a cultural group or social class on an individual’s behaviour as it is mediated through an organisation*” (2001b: 2). For Reay *et al* (2001b) ‘cultural group or social class’ refers to the young people and their families within the catchment area of a school. These young people and their families will have their own habituses rooted in their histories that they will bring to, and articulate within, a school or college. Whilst such habituses affect the institutional culture of the school or college, the organisational culture of the school/college in turn presents a different, institutionally based collective habitus (institutional habitus) that affects those that come into contact with it (Reay *et al*, 2001b: 2).

The relationship between familial and institutional habitus is depicted as a dialectical *encounter*, each having some impact on the other that has to be empirically verified (Reay *et al*, 2001b: 5). This offers a useful insight to this study as institutional habitus becomes “...*an intervening variable, providing a ‘semi-autonomous’ means by which class, raced and gendered processes are played out in the lives of students...*” (Reay *et al*, 2001b:2). Useful though the study of Reay *et al* (2001b) is however, I wish to propose a modified definition of institutional habitus to guide this study. My definition of institutional habitus is ‘*the impact of an organisation upon an individual, or group of individuals, as mediated by a cultural group or class*’. Here, ‘cultural group or class’ is understood to be the teaching staff of an educational institution, as opposed to the young people and their families as in the definition offered by Reay *et al* (2001b). The specificity of this definition offers two advantages to this study.

Firstly, by focusing on the impact of an educational institution *as mediated by* the teaching staff, this definition is able to highlight the extent to which the teaching staff will themselves encounter the formal organisational culture of the institution as a pre-existing material and symbolic structure that has evolved over time and which has its own history. Strong support for my approach is to be found in Willis’ (1978) account of ‘the teaching paradigm’, where he offers a convincing argument for teachers encountering institutional culture as a pre-existing entity. Writing in the context of secondary schools, Willis (1978: 64) characterises pupil-teacher relations as a form of

‘exchange’, whereby, ideally, the knowledge of the teacher is traded for respectful behaviour from the pupils. The exchange itself is secured by a ‘defining framework’ that is “...*held by the school on the material basis of its buildings, organisation, timetable and hierarchy. It is sanctioned (in normal times) by dominant cultural and social values and backed up in the last analysis by larger state apparatuses*” (Willis, 1978: 65). At the centre of this framework stands the teacher, or more precisely, the *idea* of the teacher and the moral authority that the teacher embodies. This last observation is important because for Willis (1978: 65), the teaching paradigm is relatively independent from the actions of individual teachers. Indeed, Willis (1978: 66) sees teaching paradigms themselves as coercive and constraining: any deviation from its unwritten strictures, by staff as much as pupils, will be censured. This defining framework, then, represents the structure aspect of the institutional habitus within my definition.

Although teachers encounter an institutional culture, they also *mediate* the formal culture of the institution for the students they teach. Moreover, they will do so in conformance with their own sense of professionalism and pedagogic practice. This argument is contained within my definition of institutional habitus which brings to the fore the agentic role of teachers in a way that does not seem possible in working within the definition offered by Reay *et al* (2001), whose definition of institutional habitus is of less value in relation to the highly differentiated FE teaching sector in which sub-cultures may exist within and between departments or even courses (Gleeson, 2005: 240; Wahlberg and Gleeson, 2003: 443).

Teacher mediation of the formal institutional culture is the agency side of the institutional habitus and a focus upon this leads on to the second advantage related to my definition: the potential to consider the social aspects of learning and the resulting interactions with the students. Such staff-student interactions will necessarily include the transmission of the formal curriculum, but also involve aspects of an informal, covert curriculum. This in turn interacts with the wider structural constraints/enablers of race, class and gender of the students. Thus, teachers as institutional agents may have an important effect upon the learning experiences and dispositions of their students through learning being a *socio-cultural process* rather than simply an individualised cognitive one (Colley *et al*, 2003).

Learning Cultures and Vocational Cultures

Wahlberg and Gleeson (2003: 424) have observed that there is a relative paucity of literature adopting a 'cultural' approach to learning—that is, studies which seek to emphasise the social-contextual elements of learning and in particular, the ways in which staff professionalism and pedagogic practice interact with student dispositions within the context of an educational institution. This is particularly true with regard to vocational learning within further education (Hodkinson and Bloomer, 2000).

The study by Wahlberg and Gleeson (2003) examines how staff and students make sense of the 'empty shell' (2003: 423) of a GNVQ in Business Studies through their different—and often contradictory—constructions of themselves, each other and the qualification itself. Wahlberg and Gleeson (2003) found significant contradictions between student self-perceptions and how the staff perceived them. The students saw themselves as adults who had made a positive decision to go to college and were on their way to becoming 'somebody' (Wahlberg and Gleeson, 2003: 431). The staff constructed the students and the GNVQ itself as 'second-class' (2003: 432).

The construction of the students as 'second-class' fed directly into the tutors' pedagogic practice and the students' approach to the GNVQ. Consequently, the learning was 'managed'—that is, centred upon an instrumental need to pass modular assessments—rather than 'transformative' (Wahlberg and Gleeson, 2003: 440). Wahlberg and Gleeson (2003: 432) note that the 'second class student' discourse, *"...is one of the most powerful key beliefs constructing the learning culture in the site. The tutors' perceptions of students as 'second class' impacts both on their sense of professionalism and on the teaching relations that underpin it"*. Wahlberg and Gleeson (2003) thus show how teaching staff firstly construct a conception of a group of students and the qualification they are following, and then use this construction in their pedagogic practices which then impact upon learner experiences.

The Wahlberg and Gleeson (2003) study also points to the need to consider the sense of professionalism of the staff (and the factors that impinge upon it), since it is their sense of professionalism that underpins their constructions of learners and pedagogic practice. Wahlberg and Gleeson (2003: 438) were able to show how a perception of

their loss of professional status among the GNVQ staff— from ‘subject specialists’ to ‘social workers’— acted as a powerful determinant in the staff’s construction of the students as ‘second class’. This change in the lecturers’ sense of identity itself was brought about by wider level changes within the field of Vocational Education and Training (VET), including pressures for greater social inclusion and a market and managerialist framework (Wahlberg and Gleeson, 2003: 443). Avis *et al* (2002) reached a similar conclusion in their study of staff and learners on GNVQ courses in Business, Science and IT in an FE college. This study found that the IT lecturers tended to construct their students as ‘deficient’ (Avis *et al*, 2002: 42), at least partly as a result of a sense of powerlessness among the lecturers derived from changes effected within the teaching environment (Avis *et al*, 2002: 43).

The studies of Wahlberg and Gleeson (2003) and Avis *et al* (2002) illustrate how student dispositions, and staff professionalism and pedagogic practice, interact to create a learning culture, i.e., the teaching and learning practices characteristic of a particular course. It is both possible and necessary, however, to distinguish between a learning culture and a vocational culture. Following Colley *et al* (2003) and Skeggs (1997), I define vocational culture as the cultural practices associated with a particular occupation (for example, Holiday Representative) and the related set of necessary dispositions inculcated through the VET connected to such an occupation. All vocationally focused courses will have both a learning culture and a vocational culture, with the power of the vocational culture to frame the learning culture varying according to type of course and agentic inclinations of staff (Colley *et al*, 2003).

As Skeggs (1997) was able to demonstrate in the context of post-compulsory VET, Care courses are examples of courses with a strong vocational culture that are underpinned by a ‘guiding ideology of practice’ (Colley *et al*, 2003: 487) which “...shapes students’ attitudes and serves to unify norms, values and meanings in particular learning sites” (Colley *et al*, 2003: 487). The guiding vocational discourse of practice was one of self-sacrifice and self-effacement in the care of others. Skeggs (1997) was able to show that it was not sufficient to ‘do’ caring; the students also had to ‘be’ caring:

“To be caring means that you have to embody the personal dispositions. Caring involves the assimilation of actual practices which cannot be divorced from personal feelings. The experience of the self and the knowledge of the self become organized in relation to the caring schema established by the course. The curriculum is organized in such a way that certain dispositions are invalidated and denied, others are valorized, advised and legitimated.” (Skeggs, 1997: 68, original emphasis)

Consequently, the curriculum of the Care course established a set of parameters for acceptable and unacceptable dispositions, with the teaching staff having an active role in ‘policing’ the curriculum and ‘filtering out’ students who did not display the requisite dispositions (Skeggs, 1997: 70). In this respect, it is possible to view the tutors as mediating for the students the wider vocational culture of the occupational field within which the care course was embedded (Colley *et al*, 2003).

Nonetheless, student agency remains important since the students also, to differing degrees, ‘choose’ or accept an identity:

“Students must have social and family backgrounds, individual preferences and life experiences that predispose them to orientate to the vocational habitus and become ‘right for the job’.” (Colley *et al*: 2003: 488)

Gender, race and class locations are important factors in predisposing young people to a vocational identity, although further identity work is needed to achieve it (Colley *et al*, 2003: 488). The role of VET is crucial as mediator, for as Colley *et al* (2003: 478) put it, “...VET may function to institute or realise various ‘becomings’ that are immanent, socially inscribed—in a sense, ‘waiting to happen’”. The studies of Skeggs (1997) and Colley *et al* (2003) thus add another layer of understanding of the institutional habitus for this present study. The vocational culture of a course, and the strength of its guiding ideology of practice, adds another set of variables from outside an individual institution that, in addition to the culture of the institution itself, may be mediated in the pedagogic practice of teaching staff.

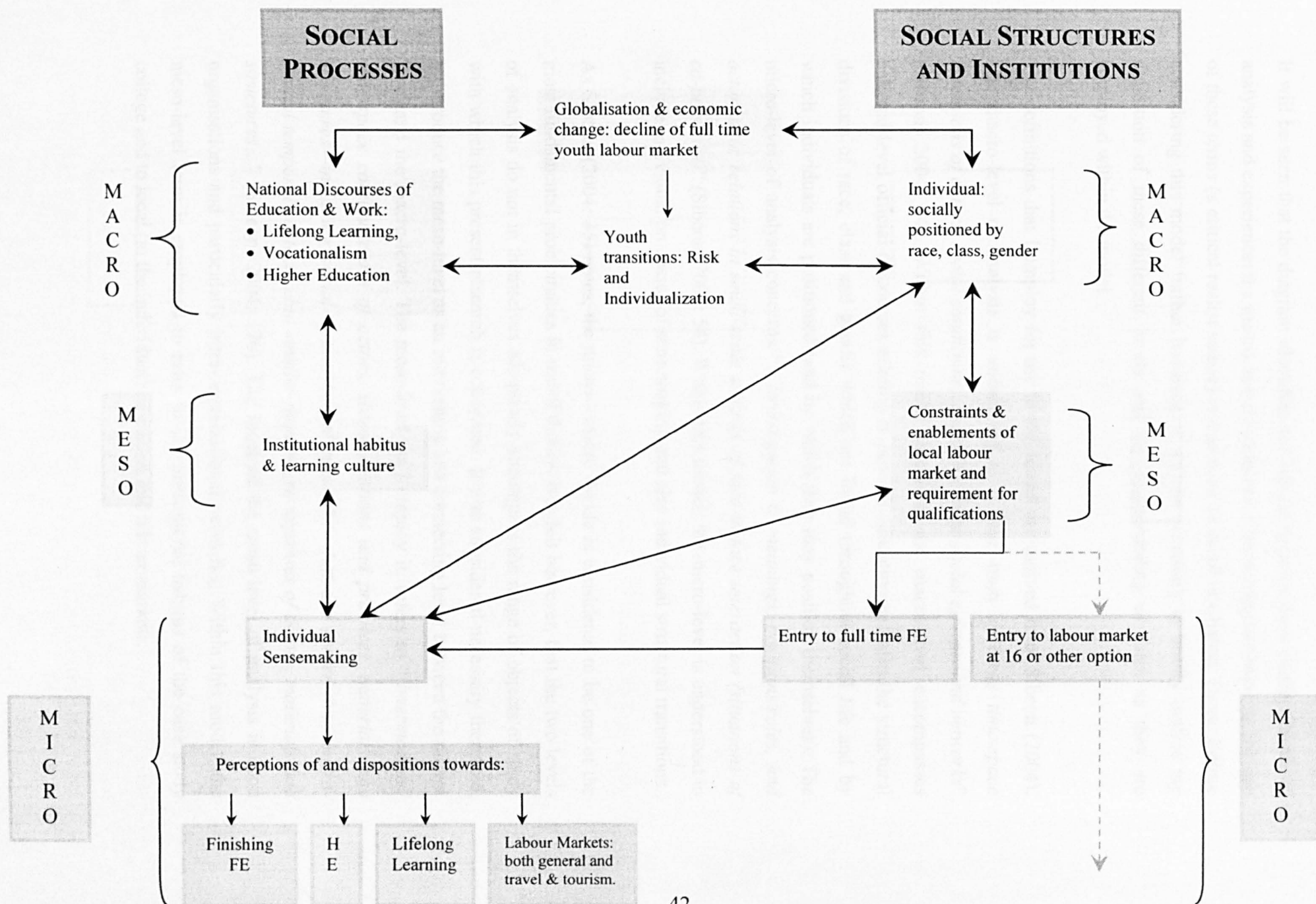
Conclusion: A Schematic Model of Social Structures and Processes surrounding Decision-Making in Education and Labour Markets by Young People aged sixteen to nineteen following a Vocationally Oriented Course.

The literature within this chapter has been reviewed in order to develop and articulate an explanatory framework through which I may address the question of youth decision-making with regard to education and labour markets. From Beck (1992) this study acknowledges elements of change—both subjective and objective—within youth transitions. However, it is felt that Beck (1992) is not able to account for class and gender-based patterns of continuity.

In order to address questions of continuity, it was found necessary therefore, to synthesize a Bourdieusian culturalist perspective with elements of Goldthorpe's (1996) RAT. Thus, it is understood that agents' decisions about education and training are derived from the dispositions of their habitus. An agent's habitus is in turn, conditioned, (though not determined) by the agent's objective position within the relevant field or fields. From this perspective, an agent will 'bring' cultural and social resources to the field that will be of differential value within that field. Thus, within the field of post-16 education and training, it may be supposed that social agents will have different levels of knowledge, experience and confidence that are derived from their personal experiences and objective social positions.

This approach has been complemented by my understanding that agents make sense of their social reality through processes of sensemaking and positioning within relevant discourses. Finally, in order to fully address the nature of an agent's, or group of agents', educational decision-making, it has been found necessary to consider staff-student interaction through the concept of institutional habitus. Thus, it is necessary to consider how staff encounter but also mediate an institutional culture for their students. I have sought to represent this complex situation in a simplified diagrammatic model, a copy of which is found on the following page.

Figure 2.1.: A Schematic Model of Social Structures and Processes surrounding Decision-Making in Education and Labour Markets by Young People aged sixteen to nineteen following a Vocationally Oriented Course.



It will be seen that the diagram identifies and moves between three distinct levels of analysis and experience: the macro, meso and micro. The ontological basis for my use of these terms (a critical realist stance) is discussed in detail in Chapter Three. Before considering this model further however, it will be necessary to briefly outline my definition of these different levels and my understanding of them as they are employed within the model.

The definitions that I employ for use in the model are derived from Sibeon (2004). The macro-level of analysis is understood as “...*the study of large time-space extensions of actors, social conditions...including large social systems and networks*” (Sibeon, 2004: 54). Within this model therefore, the macro-level encompasses national-level official discourses relating to post-16 education and also the structural divisions of race, class and gender which are found throughout social life and by which individuals are positioned (and by which they may position themselves). The micro-level of analysis concerns “...*investigation of meanings, positions/roles, and actor-actor relations in small-scale settings of face-to-face interaction (situations of co-presence)*” (Sibeon, 2004: 54). Within this model, the micro-level is understood to include individual processes of sensemaking and also individual structural transitions.

As Sibeon (2004: 35) notes, the micro—macro divide is considered to be one of the most fundamental problematics in social theory. It is felt however, that the two levels of analysis do not in themselves adequately encompass the range of objects of study with which this present research is concerned. It was considered necessary therefore, to introduce the meso-level as an intervening and connecting level between the micro-level and the macro-level. The meso-level, as I employ it, refers to “‘*intermediate*’ *time-space configurations of actors, social relations and practices, materials and structures—including social systems/social networks—that are larger than micro-spatial temporal contexts...but smaller than macro expanses of actors, materials and structures...*” (Sibeon, 2004: 176). The focus of the meso-level of analysis is upon organisations and particularly intra-organisational networks. Within this model, the meso-level term is employed to refer to the institutional habitus of the case study college and to local (to the individual) education and labour markets.

In my use of this model, economic changes at the macro-level — notably shifts within the global economy — are seen to have contributed to structural changes in the UK domestic labour market leading to (among other effects) the collapse of the minimum-aged school leavers' job market. In contemporary 'Risk Society', youth transitions are characterised by a greater subjective sense of personal responsibility which may be best summed up by the term 'individualization' (Beck, 1992). At all levels therefore, there are structures and processes in operation. To the left-hand side of the diagram, also at the macro-level, lie governmental discourses of education and work rooted within what some writers (e.g. Moore and Hickox, 1994; Avis *et al*, 1996), have identified as a 'New Vocationalist' policy paradigm. The two-way direction of the arrows between globalisation and these discourses indicates that this is conceptualised as a complex dialectical relationship. That is, globalisation is understood to be a hegemonic discourse underwritten by a neo-liberal economic ideology at least as much as it refers to a particular set of objective economic relations; this discourse serves as a 'defining frame' (Esland, 1996: 11) for E.T policy within the United Kingdom. Discourses of education and work thus reflect the wider discourse of globalisation but they also serve to support and sustain the globalisation discourse.

Positioned at the top right-hand side of the diagram is the individual at the transitional age of sixteen who will be required to make a 'choice' that will take them down several possible post-16 routes, one of which will be entry on to a full-time vocationally-oriented course at a further education college. The individual will occupy a variety of intersecting positions in terms of gender, race and class. These social and structural positions will influence the individual's experiences and perceptions of socio-economic change and educational decision-making. Moving down this side of the diagram, at the meso-level (i.e. the field), the individual will perceive a series of pressures (push factors) and limits (pull factors). Thus, the local labour market may exert pressures (promise of an income) but also limits (unappealing work in a longer term perspective); similarly, local post-16 E.T provision will present pressures (promise of qualifications and social networks) and limits (entry requirements, curricular, financial, social). The level of social and cultural resources they are able to bring to the relevant field will also condition the individual's choice. The two-way direction of the arrows across the top of the diagram from the individual to the discourse of lifelong learning indicates that individuals will

also make sense of and position themselves in relation to wider contextual discourses in accordance with their socially derived understanding; thus, structure and process are seen to interact.

Moving to the left-hand side of the diagram, it will be seen that on entry into the FE institution, the individual (at the micro-level) will interact with the institutional habitus (at the meso-level) of the college. At this level, staff and student interaction will create a particular learning culture. The student's experience of the learning culture, (itself mediated by their prior structurally derived understandings), will influence how they position themselves in relation to further institutionally related pressures (qualifications, social networks) and limits (curricular, financial, social). Again, the two-way direction of the arrows indicates that the institutional habitus and learning culture will be positioned (and in turn, position themselves), within the wider discursive and material context of VET. In sum, a matrix of structural, institutional and personal factors will combine, (though to varying degrees of relative salience dependent upon the structural position and personal experiences of the student), to influence the perceptions of young people aged sixteen to nineteen with regard to completion of their current FE course, progression to HE, lifelong learning and current and future job markets.

The model thus represents the macro, meso and micro levels of post-16 educational decision-making as distinct and relatively autonomous but which are, nevertheless, *contingently* (that is, not *necessarily*) related. The linkages between the levels should therefore always be the subject of empirical investigation in any specific case and should not be taken as 'given'.

The next chapter explains how this model was researched empirically.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

As this research is concerned with the social structural positions (e.g. race, class and gender), and social processes (e.g. sense-making, positioning and habitus) underlying educational perspectives of staff and students, it is necessary to consider ontology, and then move to epistemology and specific methodology (Burrell and Morgan, 1979: 2).

Ontology and Critical Realism

Ontology – the experience of being – goes to the very heart of the relationship between the individual and society, a relationship that remains one of the major problems of social theory (Bhaskar, 1998, 3rd edn). Bhaskar (1998, 3rd edn: 31) identifies two main schools of thought with regard to this relationship. The first, the social action approach, emphasises that “...*social objects are seen as the results of (or as constituted by) intentional or meaningful human behaviour...*”. The second viewpoint argues that “[social objects] *are seen as possessing a life of their own, external to and coercing the individual*”. Bhaskar (1998, 3rd edn) also notes a third approach based upon a dialectical interrelationship between society and people whereby “...*society forms the individuals who create society*” (1998, 3rd edn: 32). He rejects all three models however, and instead argues that, “*People and society are not...related 'dialectically'. They do not constitute two moments of the same process. Rather they refer to radically different kinds of thing*” (1998, 3rd edn: 33).

For Bhaskar, society exists prior to individuals, that is, society is “*always already made*” (1998, 3rd edn: 33, original emphasis). Consequently, it is wrong to say that agents *create* society, rather they *reproduce* or *transform* it. For Bhaskar, all activity presupposes the prior existence of social forms. From this premise, Bhaskar proposes a *transformational model of social activity* (TMSA) in which “*Society is both the ever-present condition (material cause) and the continually reproduced outcome of human agency*” (1998, 3rd edn: 34, original emphasis).

In TMSA, people have the ability to initiate changes in a purposeful way and to monitor and control these performances. It is the purposefulness, intentionality and degrees of self-consciousness of human actions that differentiate such actions from transformations in the social structure (Bhaskar, 1998, 3rd edn: 35). By contrast, the structures of society are, for the most part, unconsciously reproduced (or occasionally transformed) by the conscious activities of agents. Thus, “...*people do not marry to reproduce the nuclear family or work to sustain the capitalist economy. Yet it is nevertheless the unintended consequence (and inexorable result) of, as it is also a necessary condition for, their activity*” (Bhaskar, 1998, 3rd edn: 35).

To link human activity with social structure, Bhaskar argues for a ‘system of mediating concepts’ (1998, 3rd edn: 40) that combines the dual aspects of praxis (i.e., conscious production and unconscious reproduction of the conditions of production). Such mediating concepts (i.e. discourses) act as ‘points of contact’ (1998, 3rd edn: 40) between intentional human agency and social structures, and are composed of,

“...*the positions (places, functions, rules, tasks, duties, rights etc.) occupied (filled, assumed, enacted, etc.) by individuals, and of the practices (activities, etc.) in which, in virtue of their occupancy of these positions (and vice versa), they engage.*” (1998, 3rd edn: 40, original emphasis).

The salient point to note for this present study is that for Bhaskar (1998, 3rd edn: 41) the proper subject matter of sociological analysis is not individuals or groups *per se* but social relations; it is these that endure and which give society its capacity to constrain or favour actions. The purpose of a critical realist analysis, therefore, is to illuminate such relations.

Archer (1998) strengthens the TMSA as an ontological model by asserting that the majority of social actors are no longer alive (1998: 367). It is the result of their past activities and concepts which now conditions — in the form of enablements and constraints — our current social structures. This ‘historicity’ serves to strengthen Bhaskar’s (1998, 3rd edn: 26) assertion that agents “*may or may not be aware*” of the underlying social relationships that comprise social structure. Indeed, the disjunction

between the emergent properties of social structures and the actual experiences of agents can often militate against such awareness.

Epistemological Processes

Bhaskar (1998) offers a set of ontological understandings for this study in which human agency meets social structures via a system of mediating positions and social interactions. In order to fully articulate the methodology by which this study is guided however, it is also necessary to consider epistemological processes. This requires a discussion of: sensemaking; discourses, semiosis, ideology and hegemony; and positioning theory. As these concepts have already been discussed in detail in Chapter Two, this chapter will simply outline the salient points already identified.

‘Sensemaking’

Weick (1995) offers a plausible account of how Bhaskar’s (1998, 3rd edn: 40) ‘active subjects’ may make sense of their own reality through a system of mediating concepts, or discourses. It will be recalled from the discussion in Chapter Two that for this study, Weick (1995) also offers a valuable complement to the epistemological understandings gained through my interpretation and synthesis of Bourdieusian culturalism and RAT. In particular, Weick (1995) is able to offer this study:

- an understanding of the importance of identity, or identities, in the processes of sensemaking— identity itself being rooted in social interaction. This concept of ‘identities’—both those of the students and the teaching staff in my sample—underpins my theoretical approach to the case study (as, for example, in the discussion of habitus and cultural capital) and also informs the choice of research tools (for example, the use of semi-structured interviews to capture elements of the student’s ‘lifeworld’ (Kvale, 1996)). In his emphasis on the fluid dialectic between a situation and identity, Weick (1995) also allows for a *relational* approach to identity which sits well with the relational nature of Bhaskar’s (1998) TMSA.
- an understanding of the dynamic dialectical relationship between individual subjectivities, actions and a situation (environment, encounter). Unlike

Bourdieu however, Weick (1995) sees the importance of actions that do not take place and a place for inner reflection.

- an understanding that individuals' awareness of social reality is always partial since we extract meaning from a limited range of reference points and, inevitably, tend to synthesize from these and act upon them in ways that are congruent with our habitus.

Discourses, Semiosis, Ideology and Hegemony

As outlined already in Chapter Two:

- sensemaking is rooted in language and other meaning systems, termed semiosis.
- discourse, as I understand the term and employ it throughout this study, is distinct from semiosis as it refers more specifically to sets of language use and concepts that assist to define reality (Wetherell *et al* 2001: 3).
- a discourse that becomes accepted as common sense is hegemonic and thus for an individual represents a 'lived' experience of the relations of domination and subordination. This allows for agents to experience a sense of free will in their social practice.
- finally, the concept of hegemony has enabled me to approach the students' post-16 educational decision-making in terms of contextual push and pull factors.

Positioning

The final element in this methodological model that connects discourses to an individual's everyday interactions and personal subjectivities is positioning theory. The value of positioning theory lies in the distinction it makes between "self1" and "personas" as discussed in Chapter Two. This categorisation enables a concept of identity that is dynamic and relational but which is also based in the constraints and enablements of an individual's structural positions (race, class, gender). The value to this study of positioning theory however, only resides in its use in conjunction with critical realist ontology. The observations and insights gained in the elaboration of the

theoretical framework have enabled me to articulate a set of research facets by which this study is guided.

Research Facets

- The development and application of a theoretical framework that allows the research to elicit and understand individual and group perspectives and decision making with regard to post-16 education and training by the student case study sample.
- A critical evaluation of the relationships between social factors (particularly race, class and gender), and the processes and outcomes of positioning by students in the case study sample, with particular regard to those discourses relating to further and higher education and lifelong learning; and how this impacts upon decision making with regard to work, education and training realities and futures.
- An examination of the processes, within the case study sample, by which institutional habitus is created through the construction of structurally positioned realities by staff and students; and the processes by which institutional habitus impacts upon student decision making with regard to work, education and training realities and futures.

The specific explanatory framework regarding education and labour markets has already been covered in Chapter Two, and involves a number of other relevant social processes, including youth transitions and educational decision-making as well as background structures and processes such as globalisation and the rise of the 'Risk Society'. Indeed, it is a key assumption that the case study students will experience, articulate and perceive their social being and existence in different ways depending upon their structural positions, personal histories and the range of discourses to which they are exposed.

Levels of Analysis

In the light of the framework outlined above, this study has adopted a research perspective which seeks to consider the experiences of individual students, their

institutional interactions, and the social factors which condition these. As a consequence, the study identifies and moves between three levels of analysis and experience:

- The micro-level (personal/individual)
- The meso-level (institutional/organisational)
- The macro-level (socio-structural)

The Data Collection Framework

A Critical Realist Case Study

As social actors are rarely deeply reflexive, but more usually operate at a commonsensical level (Gramsci, 1971), they subsequently articulate poor or inaccurate knowledge of the underlying social relations that form the context for their interpretations and actions (Scott, 2000). Consequently, it is the task of the critical realist researcher to go beneath surfaces in order to trace such causal relationships. Critical realist researchers thus adopt an 'intensive' research design (Sayer, 2000: 20) concerned with tracing the material and discursive relationships within which social agents live. In view of this, a context bounded case study methodology was the most appropriate form as it enabled me to identify and work with a relatively small and restricted research population (Denscombe, 2003:38 2nd edn).

Within this critical realist case study strategy, it was decided to combine a predominantly quantitative research method (a questionnaire) with qualitative research methods (focus groups and individual interviews) as it was believed that they offer complementary strengths to this study. A questionnaire is an extensive research method aimed at “...*discovering some of the common properties and general patterns of a population as a whole*” (Sayer, 1992:242). Within the context of this present research, the population that the questionnaire survey was to cover was the first and second year cohorts of the AVCE in Travel and Tourism. The purpose of the questionnaire was to identify taxonomic groups (defined by race, class and gender)

within this population and then to identify *formal* similarity patterns and conjunctions of perceptions or behaviour within and between these groups (Sayer, 2000:21) that subsequently allow the research to consider and derive *causal* connections. The questionnaire data offers 'descriptive generalisations' (Sayer, 1992:249) against which the data from the focus groups and interviews could be correlated.

Descriptive patterns generated from the questionnaire data were used to identify the themes addressed within the focus groups and individual interviews. The purpose of these qualitative methods was to establish *concrete* explanations (Sayer, 1992:242) to complement the formal patterns arising from the questionnaire. This required the researcher to go the simple taxonomic groups of the questionnaire — race, class and gender — to identify the underlying explanatory connections within the discursive and material structures that individuals enter into (Scott, 2000).

From a critical realist perspective, therefore, the validity of a case study methodology lies not only in its representativeness in relation to large numbers ('this is an example case of'), but in its potential for uncovering factors that can explain individuals' actions and perceptions (Sayer, 2000:21). In this sense, a critical realist case study thus not only analyses and reports upon data collected, but may also generate conative connections and explanations.

The Samples in the Research

Two populations were sampled in the research. There was a stratified sample using students of the AVCE in Travel and Tourism (see below), and a sample made up of their lecturers. The student samples from the three research stages and associated methods consisted of the following numbers: Questionnaire: 72, Focus Group participants: 18, Individual follow-up interviews: 8 and Male Interviewees: 3 (see below). The staff sample consisted of 9 participants interviewed on an individual basis.

Sampling strategy: Students

It was originally intended to cover both the first and second year cohorts of the AVCE in Travel and Tourism in depth. At the end of the academic year 2003-04 however, after the distribution of the questionnaire but before the focus groups and individual interviews, the College decided to switch from the AVCE qualification to the equivalent BTEC National Diploma. After some consideration of the matter, I decided that although there was considerable overlap between the two qualifications, there was also sufficient difference between the two to raise questions about the validity of a comparison between the two cohorts.

Consequently, although my initial sample frame for this research was the first and second year cohort of the AVCE, the qualitative research methods involved only the second year cohort of the AVCE as a sample frame. It is recognised that this may create a biased sample in terms of the AVCE body as a whole, since the qualitative methods employed recorded the opinions of a sample of students who had nearly completed the qualification rather than those who had left, not completed or would fail. The findings and discussion of this study should therefore be seen in the light of this sample.

Stratified Sampling of Students: Race, Class and Gender

Following my recognition of the importance of structural factors such as race, class and gender upon student access to, and positioning towards, discourses of education and work, I decided that it was necessary to obtain data on these variables by means of a questionnaire to be distributed to the whole AVCE student body. The intention was then to utilise the structural data (race, class and gender) from the whole sample questionnaire in order to identify stratified samples that would then be used within more in-depth methods (focus groups and individual interviews) to gain more qualitative data. According to Cohen *et al*, (2000, 5th edn: 101), this is an advantage of the stratified random sample strategy: it allows for a combination of both randomisation and categorisation which permits the researcher to undertake both quantitative analysis and qualitative analysis.

In the event, due to a large number of students being absent on work placements, only 72 of the 124 students on the first and second years of the AVCE cohort completed the distributed questionnaires. Moreover, while the operationalisation of gender was straightforward, that of race and class was rather more problematic. The difficulties encountered with regard to these categories are discussed below.

The Assignment of Class Categories to Students

At the outset, it had been intended to utilise institutional data to assign a socio-economic classification to students of the entire AVCE cohort of 2003—04 following the 'official' 9-point schema of the Office of National Statistics (ONS). However, this was not possible as the case study institution does not keep data on parental occupations. Consequently, the questionnaire asked respondents to indicate the occupations of their father, mother and/or guardian as appropriate. In the event, however, only 44 (61% of the sample) indicated an occupation for 'father' while 26 (36%) gave no indication. The corresponding figures for 'mother' were little better as only 48 respondents (67%) gave an indication whilst 22 (or 30.5% of the sample) gave no answer. Thus, approximately one third of the sampled cohort could not be assigned a socio-economic classification by the occupation of either father or mother. The result is that I had only partial information on student class categories. In order to compensate for this, and to gain at least some data on student class categories, I asked each participant in the focus groups to complete a short questionnaire in which they identified the occupation of their parent(s) and/or guardian(s). In this way I was able to correlate the opinions voiced in the focus groups with socio-economic class as identified by parental occupation, and to analyse these according to my theoretical framework.

Ethnic Categorisation of Students

The different datasets on ethnic categories used in this study also did not use consistent coding structures. The case study institution employed a 19, 17 and 18 category system respectively for enrolment on the following nested levels of representativeness:

- Travel and Tourism AVCE 2003—04
- BTEC National Diploma Programmes 2004—05
- Full-time FE programmes 2004—05

Furthermore, the dataset obtained from HESA, the national level of representativeness, employed 11 categories. The questionnaire employed 17 categories adapted from those of the case study institution. However, for the purposes of simplicity, the actual analysis of the questionnaire used only the 11 categories employed by HESA, with the extra 6 being collapsed into the 11 HESA categories (Table 3.1 p.56). ‘White’ as used in Table 3.1 includes the entries ‘White British’, ‘White Irish’ and ‘Other White Background’. The ethnic category ‘Other’ includes the entries ‘Mixed Other’, ‘Mixed White/Asian’, ‘Mixed White/Black African’, ‘Mixed White/Black Caribbean’, ‘Other Mixed Background’ and ‘Other Ethnic Background’.

Following initial analysis of the questionnaire data, I proceeded with the focus groups, formed by stratified opportunity samples broadly representative of the AVCE cohort as a whole. I intended to conduct four focus group sessions (Table 3.2 p.63). Two groups were composed of ‘White’ females. The third group was composed of ethnic minority females drawn from different Asian backgrounds and different Black backgrounds. Finally, by the time of the focus group sessions there were only four male students remaining on the second year of the AVCE. For the purposes of participant convenience, I interviewed two of these students (one of ‘White British’ background and another of ‘Black or Black British Caribbean’ background) together, whereas the other two male participants (one of ‘Other Asian’ background and another of ‘Black or Black British Caribbean background’) were interviewed separately.

Sample Representativeness

According to Hitchcock and Hughes (1995, 2nd edn: 108) the issue of representativeness “...surrounds the extent to which the situation, individuals or groups investigated are typical or representative of the situation, individuals, or

group as a whole". The representativeness of my questionnaire sample is centred around the relationship between four 'nested' data levels:

- **Level 1:** The level of the AVCE cohort of 2003—04 from which the questionnaire sample was drawn;
- **Level 2:** All students enrolled on BTEC National Diploma or similar courses at the case study institution in the academic year 2004—05;
- **Level 3:** All students enrolled on any full-time FE programme at the case study institution in the academic year 2004—05; and
- **Level 4:** National level statistics provided by HESA for all 16 to 19 year olds enrolled on the first year of an HE programme in Tourism or related courses for the academic year 2002—03 (the latest year for which such statistics are available).

The first three levels were chosen because they relate to the case study institution. Level 4 was chosen because a major focus of this study is upon the positioning of FE students in relation to HE, and it was therefore considered necessary to compare the questionnaire sample with national figures for participation in tourism and related HE programmes. The figures for these levels are given in Table 3.1 (p.56).

Table 3.1: Representativeness of Questionnaire Sample by Gender and Ethnicity[†]

	Population	Gender by %		Ethnic Group by %										
		M	F	W	BBC	BBA	OBB	AABI	AABP	AABB	CH	OAB	OT	U
L E V E L 1	Questionnaire Sample 2003—04	18.06 (n=13)	81.94 (n=59)	69.44 (n=50)	8.33 (n=6)	1.39 (n=1)	0	12.5 (n=9)	1.39 (n=1)	0	0	1.39 (n=1)	5.56 (n=4)	0
	AVCE in Travel & Tourism Cohort 2003—04 at case study institution	17.74 (n=22)	82.26 (n=102)	61.28 (n=76)	8.07 (n=10)	0.81 (n=1)	1.61 (n=2)	15.32 (n=19)	6.46 (n=8)	0	1.61 (n=2)	2.42 (n=3)	2.42 (n=3)	0
2	All 2-Yr BTEC ND F/T Programmes 2004—05 at case study institution	16 (n=77)	84 (n=409)	59.88 (n=291)	10.08 (n=49)	0.82 (n=4)	0.21 (n=1)	7.20 (n=35)	6.17 (n=30)	2.47 (n=12)	0.62 (n=3)	1.03 (n=5)	5.35 (n=26)	6.17 (n=30)
3	All F/T FE Programmes 2004—05 at case study institution	24 (n=319)	76 (n=1023)	61.92 (n=831)	9.46 (n=127)	0.75 (n=10)	0.3 (n=4)	3.95 (n=53)	4.25 (n=57)	1.12 (n=15)	1.04 (n=14)	0.89 (n=12)	7.45 (n=100)	8.87 (n=119)
4	All 16—19 Year-Olds on First Yr Undergraduate HE Programmes in Tourism, Transport and Travel 2002—03	21 (n=315)	79 (n=1166)	84.33 (n=1249)	1.96 (n=29)	0.94 (n=14)	0.34 (n=5)	4.59 (n=68)	1.01 (n=15)	0.13 (n=2)	0.95 (n=14)	0.68 (n=10)	1.96 (n=29)	3.11 (n=46)

Explanation of Terms

M: Male **F:** Female

W: White **BBC:** Black or Black British Caribbean **BBA:** Black or Black British African **OBB:** Other Black Background

AABI: Asian or Asian British Indian **AABP:** Asian or Asian British Pakistani **AABB:** Asian or Asian British Bangladeshi **OAB:** Other Asian Background

CH: Chinese / Other Ethnic Chinese **OT:** Other **U:** Unknown

[†] All data presented in this thesis is rounded to two decimal places.

The questionnaire sample is exactly representative of the gender balance for the AVCE cohort as a whole (level 1), and is closely representative of the gender balance for all students on BTEC courses at the case study college (level 2). There is a slightly higher percentage of females in the questionnaire sample than in levels 3 and 4.

Ethnicity presents a more complex picture. The questionnaire sample comprises a higher percentage of 'White' students compared to their distribution within levels 2 and 3. This percentage however, is lower than at the national level, (level 4). The distribution of students of 'Black or Black British Caribbean' origin is similar across the questionnaire sample and levels 1, 2 and 3, but forms a larger percentage of level 4. The questionnaire sample is broadly representative of the proportion of 'Asian or Asian British Indian' students in the AVCE cohort but is significantly over-representative of their distribution at levels 2, 3 and 4. The questionnaire sample of students of 'Asian or Asian British Pakistani' origin is representative of the national level statistics for this group (level 4), yet significantly under-represents their distribution in levels 1, 2 and 3 (the case study institution). Also notable is the absence of students of 'Asian or Asian British Bangladeshi' and 'Chinese/Other Ethnic Chinese' origin from my questionnaire sample when compared against levels 1 2 and 3 of the nested levels.

For the purposes of this study, the salient comparison is between my questionnaire sample, the AVCE cohort (level 1) and the national level statistics (level 4) as we can use these to directly compare the gender/ethnic composition of an FE programme with those of all HE programmes within the same broad subject area (Travel and Tourism). This is useful as it indicates levels of FE—HE progression. Thus, we can see that the gender balance between these three populations (questionnaire sample, levels 1 and 4) is similar, but there are marked dissimilarities between the ethnic groups. There is a higher percentage of 'White' students at level 4 than in the questionnaire sample and level 1, while for minority ethnic groups, the situation is the reverse. There may be a complex set of reasons behind this including the particular ethnic mix of the urban area of the case study institution as compared with the national ethnic make-up.

Sampling Strategy: Staff

The criterion for the staff interview sample selection was that participants should teach at least some of the second year cohort of the AVCE at least once a week. This was to increase the likelihood of the interviewees having a good knowledge of the AVCE group as a whole and being able to respond to questions about individual students. After consultation with the Co-ordinator for Travel and Tourism, nine potential interviewees, including the Co-ordinator himself, were identified as meeting this criterion (Table 3.4 p.66). The sample consequently comprised the Co-ordinator (a tourism lecturer), six other tourism lecturers and two Key Skills lecturers. All the lecturers were requested to participate either by email or verbally. All nine agreed to participate.

Data Collection Methods

The Student Questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed as the first stage of the research process, and had two objectives:

- to obtain data on student structural background factors (race, class and gender) that would then allow stratified focus group and interview samples based upon those structural cleavages; and
- to gain some initial data related to the research issues of the project that could be analysed and used to inform the qualitative methods of the research.

Pilot Study of the Questionnaire

Before distributing the questionnaire, it was decided to carry out a pilot study with five students selected on an opportunity basis from within groups of NVQ Catering students that I teach. This was carried out in March 2004. A pilot study is a testing of one or more research tools on a small-scale population prior to their use on a larger scale research population (Youngman, 1984: 172). Saunders *et al* (2003, 3rd edn:

308) state that the purpose of the pilot test is to refine the questionnaire in order to minimize problems that respondents may encounter in answering the questions and to avoid problems in recording the data. In addition piloting enables the researcher to assess content and face validity of the questions and the likely reliability of the resulting data (Saunders *et al*, 2003, 3rd edn: 308).

Face validity refers to whether the questionnaire is intelligible to the respondent. I obtained further information on face validity by focusing on:

- time taken to complete the questionnaire;
- clarity of instructions;
- clarity and potential ambiguity of questions;
- any questions respondents felt uneasy about answering;
- any major topic omissions;
- clarity of layout;

The pilot study indicated only minimal changes to be made to the questionnaire with only three questions needing slight rewording. The length of time taken to complete the questionnaire was not considered problematic at 15 to 25 minutes.

To demonstrate content validity, an instrument must show that, “...*the items and questions cover the full range of the issue or attitude being measured*” (Kumar, 1996: 138). It is unreasonable however, to expect one instrument to entirely cover all research issues. This is particularly true of self-administered questionnaires which need to balance the amount of data gained with the need to be as succinct as possible to avoid demotivating respondents. In this case, the researcher,

“...*must ensure that the elements of the main issue to be covered in the research are both a fair representation of the wider issue under investigation (and its weighting) and that the elements chosen for the research sample are themselves addressed in depth and breadth*” (Cohen *et al*, 2000, 5th edn: 109—10).

The process of establishing content validity began prior to the distribution and analysis of the pilot questionnaire with my supervisor's feedback on the draft copies of the questionnaire. This feedback resulted in two revisions of the original questionnaire.

Questionnaire Survey Analysis

The questionnaire survey (see Appendix One) was distributed to the AVCE students in April 2004. A total of 72 questionnaires were completed, 47 by first year students and 25 by second years. As none of the respondents had written an answer to the open-ended question, the analysis was quantitative and undertaken using the Excel spreadsheets package. This was done for two reasons:

- the questionnaire had been designed to gain 'descriptive' statistics from which I could summarise or describe a situation (Rowntree, 1981: 19);
- given the small size of my questionnaire sample, a specialist statistical package could not make any meaningful calculations.

Data Reduction and Data Input

The first task prior to analysis was to reduce the mass of data obtained into a format suitable for analysis. This is known as data reduction (Cohen *et al*, 2000, 5th edn). The first task in this process is editing for completeness and accuracy (Moser and Kalton, 1977: 411-12). The second and primary task of data reduction is assigning a code to each possible response to a survey question. After this data reduction process had been completed, there remained the straightforward task of inputting the data into Excel.

Questionnaire Data Collation

Collation essentially consisted of two separate tasks. The first was to produce descriptive statistics (cumulative totals) for the questionnaire sample as a whole. The second task involved cross-tabulations in order to analyse the questionnaire data in terms of the category variables of race, class and gender, as well as other category

variables such as year of course and GCSE results. For this task I used the 'pivot table' function of Excel.

Whilst I was able to operationalise the variable of socio-economic class to only a limited extent, the data on race and gender was quickly and easily converted into charts and tabular formats as appropriate. An issue arose, however, with regard to the analysis of the ranking order and multiple-choice items (the most common types of questions).

When editing for completeness and accuracy of the questionnaires, I noted that many respondents had i) marked more than one option as their first choice in a ranking order item or ii) had ticked more than one option in a multiple-choice item in which the options were intended to be mutually discrete. I decided to accept such multiple responses as valid for two reasons. Firstly, with hindsight I accepted that given the nature of the questions in my ranking order and multiple-choice items, it was valid for a respondent to indicate more than one option if they so wished. Secondly, and more pragmatically, to invalidate all such multiple responses would have meant invalidating a potentially large amount of data, making the results even less meaningful. Consequently, the total number of responses indicated exceeds the total number of respondents in many multiple-choice and ranking order items.

The Student Focus Groups

Krueger (1994: 6) defines a focus group as “*a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment.*” He goes on to state that a focus group is typically composed of between six and ten people with characteristics in common. For Krueger (1994), the principal advantage of focus groups is that they are a socially oriented procedure that taps into people's capacity to discuss and interact with others in order to form and offer opinions. Although focus groups are an “unnatural setting”, by being focused on a particular issue they may well yield insights that might otherwise not be available in a conventional interview. Focus groups can also be economical on time as they can produce a large quantity of data in a short period of time although they may yield less than through an equivalent number of individual interviews (Morgan, 1988: 19).

Focus groups may be used as the sole method of data gathering or in addition to other forms of research, such as interviews and questionnaires, when such combinations of methods help to serve the purposes of triangulation. Triangulation is defined as “...*more than one method of data collection within a single study*” (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1995, 2nd edn: 180). Using contrasting methods offers the possibility of different perspectives on a topic, which in turn can enhance the validity of the data (Denscombe, 2003, 2nd edn: 133).

Focus groups were used in this research after the questionnaire survey and analysis, but before the individual interviews. By sampling the student volunteers for the focus groups by gender and then by ethnic group, I hoped to elicit and develop any salient experiences and perspectives that might arise from discussion within relatively homogenous and similarly positioned groupings (Harre and van Langenhove, 1999). It was decided that due to the aims of the research, the sessions would follow a semi-structured agenda (see Appendix 2). The advantage of the semi-structured interview is that it allows a sequence of themes and suggested questions that are of interest to the researcher to be covered. (Kvale, 1996: 124). Semi-structured agendas are also sufficiently open to allow for serendipitous changes to sequencing and the precise question asked.

Three focus groups of female student volunteers took place in March and April 2005. The ethnic composition of each group is indicated in Table 3.2 (p.63). Each focus group took place in a classroom with the participants seated around a table in clear view of each other. Before the session I explained the purpose of the research and the necessity for tape-recorded data. I also assured the participants of full anonymity and the right to withdraw at any time. Participants completed a brief questionnaire to provide information on GCSE grades (or equivalent) and parental occupation. I then asked each volunteer to record their name onto the tape which enabled me to distinguish each voice and so correlate their opinions and experiences with the data provided on the mini-questionnaire. For logistical reasons it was not possible to interview the remaining four male students together as a focus group. Consequently, the male students were interviewed in one double interview and two individual interviews (see table 3.3 on page 64 below).

Table 3.2: Focus Group Interviews

Interview	Date	No of Participants	Gender	Ethnic Group
Focus Group 1	17.03.05	5	Female	White
Focus Group 2	05.04.05	6	Female	White
Focus Group 3	07.04.05	7	Female	Mixed minority ethnic

Questions were asked in each of the three focus groups in relation to:

- experiences of school;
- decisions about:
 - i) continuing education and training after 16
 - ii) following a vocational course;
 - iii) following a travel and tourism course;
 - iv) going to the case study college;
- experiences of the case study college;
- plans for after the AVCE;
- their ideal job by the age of 30;
- general attitudes towards qualifications and the labour market;
- specific attitudes towards qualifications in the travel and tourism industry.

Krueger (1994) is a strong advocate of focus groups, seeing their principal strength as their potential for free interaction between members. Nevertheless, he also recognises their limitations. Firstly, respondents can feel pressured by group dynamics into offering opinions they do not really have. In the case of the three student focus groups conducted for this study however, there were no ‘obvious’ signs of conversational dominance by one or more student(s).

Another limitation may be that the data can be more difficult to analyse than in an individual interview, since:

“Group interaction provides a social environment, and comments must be interpreted within that context. Care is needed to avoid

lifting comments out of context and out of sequence or coming to premature conclusions. Occasionally participants will modify or even reverse their positions after interacting with others.”
(Krueger, 1994: 36)

This last point is an important one. It highlights the fact that a focus group is essentially a social encounter and that a transcript of the event, however detailed, may not adequately convey this. This underlines the need for the researcher to regularly return to the original recording to get a stronger sense of the nature of the social interaction that took place (Kvale, 1996).

The Individual Student Interviews

Eleven individual interviews and one double interview were carried out in May and June 2005. The table below indicates the gender and ethnicity of each interviewee.

Table 3.3: Individual Student Interviews by Gender and Ethnic Group

Name	Date	Sex	Ethnic Group
‘LD’	13.04.05	F	‘White British’
‘LDD’	14.04.05	F	‘White British’
‘MB’	14.04.05	F	‘Black or Black British Caribbean’
‘LH’	19.04.05	F	‘White British’
‘LM’	21.04.05	F	‘White British’
‘TM’	21.04.05	F	‘Asian or Asian British Indian’
‘SF’	26.04.05	F	‘Other Asian Background’
‘NP’	28.04.05	F	‘Black or Black British Caribbean’
‘BM’	04.05.05	M	‘Other Asian Background’
‘JP’	12.05.05	M	‘White British’
‘MT’	12.05.05	M	‘Black or Black British Caribbean’
‘MTT’	25.05.05	M	‘Black or Black British Caribbean’

The individual interviews had two related aims:

- to follow up on and develop any relevant issues that arose during the focus groups; and
- to gain more detailed biographical information on individual participants than had been possible with the focus groups.

Each interview took place in the same physical environment as the focus groups described above and followed the same ethical protocols. For the interviews, I prepared a semi-structured schedule (Appendix 5) that allowed for a ‘tailoring’ of the individual interview. Thus, while following the same common set of topics as for the focus groups, each interview sought to elicit or follow up on biographical details particular to the individual interviewee.

The individual interviews were therefore a very important part of the research process of this study. I was able to investigate the influence of structural factors important to my research concerns and also to probe the unique experiences and perspectives of each individual that form their ‘lifeworld’. For Kvale (1996: 54) the lifeworld is “...*the world as it is encountered in everyday life and given in direct and immediate experience, independent of and prior to explanations*”.

The Staff Interviews

Nine members of teaching staff were interviewed individually between 27.06.05 and 08.07.05. Table 3.4 (p.66) below provides information about the interviewees. The interviews also took place in classrooms around a small table and were tape recorded with the participants’ permission. The same ethical protocols of informed consent, anonymity and the right to withdraw at any time that observed for the student research were again employed.

Table 3.4: Details of Staff Interviewees

Name	Interview	Sex	Ethnic Group	Position
‘BL’	27.06.05	F	White British	Tourism Lecturer
‘JH’	28.06.05	F	White British	Tourism Lecturer
‘AE’	28.06.05	F	White British	Tourism Lecturer
‘JF’	28.06.05	M	White British	Co-ordinator
‘BM’	28.06.05	F	‘Asian or Asian British Indian’	Tourism Lecturer
‘SH’	04.07.05	F	White British	Key Skills Lecturer
‘AM’	06.07.05	F	White British	Tourism Lecturer
‘SW’	07.07.05	F	White British	Tourism Lecturer
‘AN’	08.07.05	F	White British	Key Skills Lecturer

Each interview followed a semi-structured agenda (Appendix 7) which covered the following topics: personal history/biography of the participant; current workloads; opinions on college ethos/purpose; use/value of AVCE qualification; perceptions of differences (if any) between students by gender or ethnic group; and perceptions of individual students.

Analysis of Qualitative Data

Transcription

Once the qualitative research was complete, I then had to decide on the most appropriate method for analysing it. Prior to that however, I had to consider how I would transcribe the focus groups and interviews. It was agreed with my supervisor that it was necessary only to transcribe the first of the student focus groups (Appendix

3), the first of the individual student interviews (Appendix 6), and the first of the individual staff interviews (Appendix 8). The analysis of these transcripts was undertaken utilising an open coding methodology, which then became ‘axial’ codings used to analyse the other transcripts.

This coding method however, still left questions with regard to the conventions that I would employ in the transcripts. As Kvale (1996: 163) notes, a transcription is an artificial creation that moves from an oral to a written mode of communication and in so doing requires the researcher to make a series of judgements and decisions. It appeared to me that, following Taylor (2001), an important decision to make would be whether I view language as a *topic* or a *resource*. As Taylor (2001: 15) argues, the issue here is whether the analyst is studying language itself or using the language as a resource to study something else. In reality, all approaches to discourse analysis should problematise language, but it was clear to me that in line with the interests of my research issues, I was using language as a resource for studying wider social and cultural issues.

A second related point was the question of whether to focus upon the *process* or *content* of language. According to Taylor (2001: 15), the former approach considers the interaction of speakers and what people do through language, the latter analyses the content of what is said. In this case, language use may be analysed as a finished performance. Again, it was apparent to me that for my research purposes, I was interested in the *content* of the language. Consequently, I decided that it would not be useful for me to attempt to indicate pauses or perceived emphasis by speakers. It would be useful, however, to produce a more or less verbatim record of what was said, with indications of overlapping speech because I intended to follow up the focus groups with one-to-one interviews and the comments of individual speakers would be important.

The Preferred Data Analysis Model

Having decided upon the form that the transcription would take, various models of qualitative interview analysis were available to me, though their common characteristic is the use of some form of coding or scoring by which data are

‘reduced’ and then categorised and interpreted (Cohen *et al*, 2000, 5th edn). I discounted the use of a computer package because I considered that performing a ‘manual analysis’ would enable me to gain a deeper and quicker understanding of my data.

I chose to follow the model of analysis developed by Auerbach and Silverstein (2003) as I believe it contains the essence of the models expounded by Strauss and Corbin (1998, 2nd edn) and Miles and Huberman (1994, 2nd edn) but in a much more accessible and clear way. Table 3.5 below provides an overview of the stages involved in the Auerbach and Silverstein (2003) model. It should be noted, however, that although Table 3.5 presents the analytic process in linear form, in reality the analysis was an iterative process involving feedback and overlaps.

Table 3.5: Qualitative Data Analysis Model

MAKING THE TEXT MANAGEABLE

1. Explicitly state your research concerns and theoretical framework.
2. Select the relevant text for further analysis. Do this by reading through your raw text with Step 1 in mind, and highlighting relevant text.

HEARING WHAT WAS SAID

3. Record repeating ideas by grouping together related passages of relevant text.
4. Organize themes by grouping repeating ideas into coherent categories.

DEVELOPING THEORY

5. Develop theoretical constructs by grouping themes into more abstract concepts consistent with your theoretical framework.
6. Create a theoretical narrative by retelling the participant’s story in terms of the theoretical constructs.

(Source: Auerbach, C.F and Silverstein, L.B (2003) P. 43)

Phase 1: ‘Making the text manageable’

Auerbach and Silverstein (2003: 42) describe the first phase of the model as a ‘filtering process’ whereby the researcher chooses which parts of the text to analyse

and which parts to discard. The researcher will be aided in this process by explicitly recalling their research concerns and the theoretical framework(s) within which they are working. In my case, because I had prepared a semi-structured agenda for the focus groups that was closely related to my research concerns, I was not left with much 'superfluous' text to filter out.

Phase 2: 'Hearing what was said'

In this phase of analysis, Auerbach and Silverstein (2003: 42) advise the researcher to extract a list of 'repeating ideas' from the text and then group these repeating ideas into a list of more general 'themes'. Auerbach and Silverstein (2003: 62) describe a theme as "*...an implicit idea or topic that a group of repeating ideas have in common*". This process allows the researcher to learn more about the research participants and their subjective experiences of the world (Auerbach and Silverstein, 2003: 64). For me, this proved to be the case. By following this process — which grounds theory in data — I have been able to provide a conceptualization of the experiential realities available to, and constructed by, agents as individuals and as groups (Archer, 1998: 369).

Phase 3: 'Developing Theory'

The final phase of Auerbach and Silverstein's (2003) model is that of developing theory by generating 'theoretical constructs' that are used to build a 'theoretical narrative'. The aim of this phase is to move the analysis from the description of the participants' subjective experiences to a more theoretical level, and to extract a Master List of theoretical constructs from the list of themes. The final step is to write up a theoretical narrative which attempts to use theoretical constructs in order to organise the participants' subjective experiences into a coherent account. The example below will demonstrate the process.

An Example of Worked Piece of Qualitative Data

The following is an extract from the first student focus group session[‡]. The complete transcript of this session is to be found in Appendix Three. The group is composed of ‘White’ females in the second year of the AVCE. ‘AM’ denotes the interviewer; all other initials refer to the interviewees.

[‡] In this and all transcripts provided in the Appendices, the following orthographic conventions have been followed:

[inaud]: Inaudible

[] Overlapping speech

[?] Speaker unknown

[...] Pause of 3 seconds or more

83 **AM** Thanks, [Laughter] excellent
84 Can I ask when did you decide that you were going to carry on
85 studying after you'd finished your GCSEs?
86 **LH** It's always something I've wanted to do,
87 **LD** Forever since I was little I've wanted to go to college and uni, definitely
88 **LDD** No it wasn't always a decision for me I was, I would have thought that I
89 would have got a job straight away but when it come to it I was thinking
90 what actually am I going to go into? And I'd always wanted to do
91 travelling and that so I thought I'll do 2 years and then I can get my job
92 then, that's what I always thought
93 **LM** Mine was just a case of I thought I was going to go and work but then
94 when it came to it I thought I don't want to be working yet, I want
95 another two years of doing nothing really socialising with my mates and
96 that's what it was [LDD: That is true]
97 **LM** I didn't want to go into working straight away, so that's
98 **LH** No, I didn't want to go into work
99 **LDD** You've got the rest of your life to work
100 **AR** I wanted to go to work I just didn't know what I wanted to do and I'd
101 done leisure so I thought, and I enjoyed that so I thought I might as well
102 just carry on that side of it
103 **AM** That was how you got into this yeah ok
104 OK and that's kind of answered my next question about the decision to
105 do travel and tourism, was that.
106 **LDD** Yeah, I've just always wanted to travel and live abroad and it just I just
107 thought I want to do something that I'm going to be interested in
108 enough to get a good mark at what I'm doing which maybe [Laughter]
109 [inaud] but yeah that's what made me do it cos I love holidays (yeah) I
110 just want to live a holiday life
111 **LH** I've always been interested in the industry I go away every year, I see
112 what people do and so I just keep thinking why don't I try it one time.
113 So that's what got me into the course really.
114 **LD** I really wanna do it cos I like to learn about different cultures and things
115 like that I enjoy the culture side of holidays I don't like going to built up
116 places, you know what I mean I prefer more cultured places and I
117 wanna move abroad and have my own business abroad I don't want to
118 stay over here so what I'm going into will be the best for me
119 **LM** Mine was just a case of I didn't want to stay on at school and do A
120 levels [Laughter] so it was like a choice between this or one of the other
121 courses I didn't want to do hair, I don't want to do childcare and I was
122 interested in geography and travel so that was like why I chose this
123 really
124 **AM** Yeah
125 **AR** It's like I said earlier I'd done the leisure and I've always travelled a lot
126 so it just seemed like I really enjoy my travelling so I thought it was like
127 a logical
128 **LD** I love travelling [Yeah]
129 **LDD** I just love travelling, that is what it's all about.
130 **LD** See the world
131 **LDD** Yeah, just seeing new places

From the data within this extract I was able to develop a number of repeating ideas that were subsequently grouped together to form a Master List of Themes (Appendix 4). For example, the responses to the first question reveal quite marked differences within the group concerning motives for doing post-16 education and, by implication, attitudes to post-16 qualifications and the labour market. For 'LH' (line 86) and 'LD' (line 87) further study was something they had 'always' wanted to do. These two students also expressed similarly positive sentiments with regard to a later question about the value of qualifications within the travel and tourism industry which alerted me to a sharp difference in attitudes to the value of qualifications between 'LH' and 'LD' on the one hand and 'LDD', 'LM' and 'AR' on the other. Thus, the type of sentiments expressed by 'LH' and 'LD' were used to form the repeating idea '*I don't want to start at the bottom*' which was joined with '*I'll be making bigger money*' to form the theme '*Qualifications are valuable*' (Appendix 4, p.214).

As explained, the responses of 'LDD' (line 88) 'LM' (line 93) and 'AR' (line 100) to the first question represent quite a distinct set of motivations for going to college and a different attitude to qualifications from 'LD' and LH'. I used the response of 'LDD' as the first of a set of repeating ideas which I called '*What actually am I going to go into?*' My interpretation of the comments contained within that repeating idea is that the participants were unsure of future work options and looked upon post-16 education as a means of deferring entry to the labour market. The comments of 'LM' (line 93) and 'LH' (line 98) were used to form another repeating idea that I called '*I didn't want to go into work*'. My interpretation of the participants' comments here was that they were not yet ready to enter the labour market. Instead, they wished to continue enjoying the relative lack of responsibilities that they enjoyed in their school years. Together, these two repeating ideas, and a later one derived from the third focus group, formed a theme that I have called '*College as a buffer zone*' (Appendix 4, pp 203-4.). The implicit idea that unites the three repeating ideas within this theme is that of further education offering some participants a necessary 'breathing space' between school and future options in which to reflect and mature.

The responses to my second question on lines 104-5 also generated some repeating ideas. The response of 'LDD' (lines 106-110) and those of 'AR' (lines 125-7) and 'LD' (lines 114-18) were used to form a repeating idea that I called '*I just love travelling*'. The common thread of this idea is a perception, however vague, that

doing a course in Travel and Tourism will enable the participants to travel and work abroad. This repeating idea was later connected to another one called '*I wanted to do Cabin Crew*'. This second idea expressed much the same sentiments as the first (desire to travel) but gave them a specific vocational expression (to work as cabin crew). Together, these two repeating ideas came to form the theme '*Wanting to travel*' (Appendix 4, pp 204-5).

Validity and Reliability of the Methodology

Cohen *et al* (2000, 5th edn: 183-4) note that case study research, like other methods, has to demonstrate validity and reliability. They go on to observe however, that due to the uniqueness of a case study, it may prove difficult to demonstrate external validity. This is defined as the extent to which "*...findings from the case being investigated could be generalised to other cases in time and place*" (Scott, 2000: 3). At the same time, relating the case study findings to other research and extant literature does help to establish a degree of external validity, in the sense that this is a particular case of wider, more general phenomena. At the same time, it was important to be able to demonstrate internal validity which refers to "*...the soundness of an explanation, that is, the appropriateness of the measuring instruments and the soundness of the research design*" (Sapsford and Evans, 1984: 260-61).

Following Birley and Moreland (1998) the quantitative questionnaire method used in this study sought to ensure validity through the following measures:

- a pilot study to check that the data produced was relevant to the stated research aim and objectives;
- the checking of the research tool by 'experts' in the form of my supervisor and other local educational researchers; and
- the correlation of the research tool with research tools used within similar research projects (e.g. Thombs, 1997 and Aston, 2001).

With regard to qualitative research Cohen *et al* (2000, 5th edn: 121) argue that the greatest threat to validity is bias. The concept of bias is itself difficult in that it is bound up in conflicting conceptualisations of subjectivity and objectivity (Kvale,

1996: 64). In order to minimise bias as far as possible within the qualitative methods of this research, I have taken the following steps during data collection and analysis:

- Careful sampling of interviewees in order to avoid sampling bias;
- Avoidance of leading questions in the focus groups and interviews;
- Asking a colleague, himself an experienced researcher in education, to act as a 'critical friend' by reading two full transcriptions and independently forming his own repeating ideas and themes from the data. These were then compared with my own and found to be similar. This process acted as a form of investigator triangulation (Birley and Moreland, 1998: 43).
- Transparency of data gathering and methods of analysis including a detailed discussion of my model of data analysis and extracts of worked data.

It is acknowledged however, that it is impossible to completely ensure validity and that there are certain variables in the research process that cannot be controlled but which must be accounted for. For example, as a male researcher who interviewed predominantly female samples (of both students and teaching staff), it is recognised that gender is an important variable. Similarly, I recognise that the power relationship between me (as a teacher) and the students is asymmetrical. It is possible therefore, that these factors had an effect on bias, though my perception is that it did not affect the results in any material way.

The interviews with the teaching staff posed fewer potential issues than with the student samples. Apart from the gender imbalance noted above, there were no obvious asymmetries within the researcher-respondent relationship: all the interviewees (with the exception of the co-ordinator for the curriculum area) were at the same professional level as the researcher and all the interviewees (with the exception of one participant of 'Asian or Asian British Indian' background) were of the same ethnic group as the researcher.

According to Sapsford and Evans (1984: 259), reliability may be seen as "...*the consistency of the results obtained when using a measure in research*". Reliability refers to the capacity for another researcher to replicate one's results using the same analytical processes on the same raw research materials, or to produce comparable evidence from a similar study conducted elsewhere.

The criteria for reliability as understood within quantitative research may simply not be workable or even desirable within a qualitative study. As Cohen *et al* (2000, 5th edn: 184) observe, case study research which focuses on a particular situation or group may be unable to demonstrate reliability as replicability in the sense that no two cases may be exactly the same. Moreover, the problem of reliability is compounded by the nature of a typical small-scale qualitative research undertaking. In ethnographic research the role of the single researcher who both gathers and analyses the data inevitably means that the researcher's personal experiences and 'baggage' is likely to have an effect (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1995, 2nd edn:107). As Lecompte and Preissle (1993, 2nd edn: 334) argue however, this does not mean that qualitative research need not aim for possible replication in generating, refining, comparing and validating constructs.

Ethical Considerations of the Research

Ethical issues may arise from the types of problems under investigation; the samples used by researchers; and from whether the methods employed to gain data are valid and reliable (Cohen *et al*, 2000, 5th edn: 49). The implication of this observation is that each aspect in the research process may potentially be a source of ethical concern.

It is recognised, firstly, that the study is dealing with socially sensitive issues that require careful ethical consideration. It is believed that this is best addressed by the avoidance of bias and the assurance, as far as possible, of validity in data gathering and interpretation. As Morrison (1996) notes, methodological rigour is an ethical matter, not simply a technical one. A fundamental concept that has been adhered to with all three methods (questionnaire, focus groups, interviews) is that of informed consent. This requires that participants have the right to know the nature and purpose of the research and the right to withdraw at any time (Denscombe, 2003, 2nd edn: 138). For this study, informed consent was dealt with through a written introduction to the student questionnaire and also through a verbal explanation given by the tutors who distributed the questionnaire on my behalf. In the focus groups and individual interviews I gave a verbal explanation of the purposes of the research and reminded participants of their right to withdraw.

It is recognised that the types of data that have been collected for this study are of a relatively personal nature. This research has sought the opinions of current students and teaching staff on issues such as their understandings of the case study college, the AVCE qualification and, indeed, on their relationships with each other. Such data could therefore be deemed personal and with the potential to harm the participants if dealt with in an irresponsible manner. That is why, in gaining the trust of the participants and their informed consent, I made guarantees of confidentiality, anonymity and non-traceability. I have sought also to guarantee that the research does not harm them. This is the principal of ‘non-maleficence’ (Cohen *et al*, 2000, 5th edn: 246).

Discussion of the Findings

The findings of the research are presented in chapters 4 and 5. Although this study has used a questionnaire, focus groups and individual interviews in sequence, the findings from each research tool are not presented individually. Instead, the findings are presented in terms of:

- Staff sample perspectives
- Student sub-group perspectives
- Individual student perspectives

Thus Chapter Four presents findings that relate to the teaching staff sample. Chapter Five presents the findings from the research with the student samples. Finally, Chapter Six relates the findings of the two samples to the wider literature investigated during the course of the research. Chapter 6 also considers the extent to which the research aims have been met, and the overall achievements of the study.

Chapter Four: Staff Interviews

Introduction

Due to the importance of the concept of institutional habitus to this study, it was decided to present the findings from the individual interviews with the teaching staff of the AVCE prior to the findings from the research with the student samples, which are presented in Chapter Five. The staff members were interviewed not only because of their involvement with the students, but also because of their wider role as the embodiment of both the institutional and tourism industry cultural habitus. In effect, a key role of the lecturers is to be representatives and conduits, and so articulate and mediate the institution and industrial values in their discernment of ‘good’ students and ‘good’ workers. On this basis, it was important to establish the staff perspectives on the institution, the tourism industry, the AVCE and the students themselves. Table 4.1 below gives a breakdown of the gender and ethnic group of the staff interviewees.

Table 4.1: Staff Interviewees: Gender and Ethnic Composition

Name	Sex	Ethnic Group
‘BL’	F	White British
‘JH’	F	White British
‘AE’	F	White British
‘JF’	M	White British
‘BM’	F	‘Asian or Asian British Indian’
‘SH’	F	White British
‘AM’	F	White British
‘SW’	F	White British
‘AN’	F	‘Other White Background’

From the table it can be seen that the majority of the staff interviewees are ‘White’ female, the exceptions being one ‘White’ male and a female of ‘Asian or Asian British Indian’ background. During the interviews and subsequent analysis I was alert to possible differences in perspectives among the interviewees that could be attributed

to gender, ethnicity or position. The analysis did not indicate, however, any differences that I was able to perceive.

The understanding of institutional habitus employed throughout this chapter is that given in Chapter Two, i.e. the experience of an organisation upon an individual or groups of individuals, particularly as it is mediated through its staff, in this case, the AVCE lecturers. Whilst it is recognised that student identities and occupational positioning are subject to a 'matrix of influences' that overlap each other (Reay *et al* 2001b: 3) including families and peers, the data provides evidence of a distinct, at least 'semi-autonomous' (Reay *et al*, 2001b: 2) effect for institutional influence as mediated through teaching staff.

The staff appeared to influence student 'positioning' (Harre and van Langenhove, 1999) in two ways. Firstly, on a student group level the staff represented and embodied the institution in a direct and immediate way by concretising, personalising and mediating/interpreting the college culture and requirements for the students. Secondly, in their pedagogical role, the staff structured the students' perceptions of the travel and tourism industry and of further and higher education. Consequently, institutional habitus implies an interactive relationship between staff and institution involving different degrees of compliance, accommodation and/or resistance by the staff as expressed through their pedagogical practice and personal sense of professionalism. Furthermore, the students then have to live by, and within, the institutional habitus as represented by the staff, even where it runs counter to the students' own experiences and orientations.

In the light of the above points, and as a means to structure the staff findings, this chapter is divided into the following sections which move from the meso to the micro levels:

- Staff perceptions of the case study college
- Staff professionalism
- Staff perceptions of the AVCE
- Staff perceptions of the students

Staff Perceptions of the Case Study Institution

Employees' perceptions of their employers, and ultimately their sense of themselves as workers, can be powerfully influenced by how they believe others perceive their organisation (Weick: 1995: 20). In turn, those external perceptions may influence the way the staff conduct their work. All the staff implied that the college enjoys a high status within the region and industry and three of the interviewees made this explicit. In their view, this was evidenced through its connections to an 'elite' university, its high OFSTED score and its extensive links with industry. The comment below relates to the College's OFSTED rating:

"The college is quite strong as regards that [links with industry] and the inspection report actually brought that through as well. It has a fantastic reputation as well out there, not only in [case study college city] but in surrounding areas. Also, as you know from OFSTED we were voted grade one and, ermm, only three colleges in the country got voted that. We're very, very high up if you like there." (BM: 'Asian or Asian British Indian' Female Tourism Lecturer)

It is also clear that there was a high degree of congruence between staff perceptions of the case study college and the image that the institution itself promotes in its official marketing literature. Furthermore, student questionnaire and interview data also emphasised the high status of the institution.

Staff Professionalism

Emotional Labour and Teacher Professionalism

All the lecturers considered that they offer the students a lot of support in their studies and, more generally, that they enjoy quite close relations with the students. This belief was also generally supported by data from the student questionnaire and interviews. Such support may be termed 'Emotional Labour', defined as, "...the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display" (Hochschild, 2003:7). Jobs that require emotional labour involve face-to-face or voice-to-voice

contact with other people in order to effect an emotional state in the person (Hochschild, 2003:7).

At the same time, whilst it is true that relations between staff and students were characterised by elements of pragmatism and instrumentality on both sides, it would be wrong to conclude that the caring labour of the lecturers had been simply commodified under the pressures of performativity, thus rendering it inauthentic. Certain types of waged labour, because of their interactions with others, cannot be fully commodified, for workers often have motivations that are not purely monetary, including caring about the results of their work (Himmelweit, 1999; Avis and Bathmaker, 2004).

Indeed, the emotional labour that the lecturers perform in their support of the students was an integral part of their sense of professional identity as FE lecturers. Due to the diverse nature of employment within the tourism industry itself, from which the AVCE lecturers have come, they seemed to have a relatively weak sense of vocational identity when compared to accountants or engineers who have become FE teachers (Robson, 1998). They did not exhibit what Clow (2001: 413) has termed 'Ex-officio professionalism' whereby, for example, an accountant who teaches remains fundamentally an accountant. Instead, the staff exhibited a 'Holistic Professionalism' (Clow, 2001: 414-5) where a strong emphasis is placed upon the pastoral role of the teacher. This strong sense of identification with the pastoral care of students is well expressed by 'AM', a female lecturer and Year Manager:

"Their mother, I become their mother. But I tell them that at induction I am your mom for the next...and they take that literally I have to say....you get everything and being a lecturer and especially, you know, being a year manager, you're a counsellor and, you know, that comes as part and parcel of the job and if you can't handle that, and I think in FE you need to know because they are children at the end of the day even though they don't think they are and they do want, I know you're not supposed to, they do want a hug occasionally when things get just that little bit too tough and the tears start flowing." (AM: 'White British' Female Tourism Lecturer)

Such a stance may also be linked to eight of the nine lecturers being female. As Hochschild (2003) observes, emotional labour is often gendered labour. Women are seen, (and frequently see themselves), as being more sensitive to emotions and better at managing them than men. They are seen as more empathetic and tolerant than men. The result is that a social construct (caring) comes to be naturalized and considered to be a normal part of what it is to be female (Acker, 1995; Forrester, 2005). 'AM' above gives a specifically gendered construction to her account of her sense of 'duty' to care for the AVCE students. She positions herself as their surrogate 'mother' whilst the students are "children at the end of the day". 'AM' sees her professional identity as a caring FE teacher to be inextricably bound up with her more fundamental social identity as a woman. Women are 'natural' mothers and therefore make 'natural' carers of children and adolescents. Indeed, Acker (1995: 23) observes that the use of 'maternal imagery' in discussions of teachers and teaching has very strong, deep historical roots.

At the same time, some of the lecturers considered such strong ties to not always be in the best interests of the students and there appears to be a degree of tension between the desire to be supportive and the desire to inculcate autonomous learning habits in the students. Comments by 'JH' and 'SW' (both 'White' female lecturers) indicated that they considered some students to be over-reliant on staff support with work, thus running the risk of failing to develop properly as autonomous learners. This tension may be seen as a characteristic of the lecturers' position in straddling the divide between the levels of 'policy as espoused', 'policy as enacted' and the level of 'policy as experienced' (Rudd and Evans, 1998: 41-2). For Rudd and Evans (1998), 'policy as espoused' refers to the macro-level of discourse: government white papers and reports; 'policy as enacted' refers to how such policies are actually put into practice in local and institutional contexts; and 'policy as experienced' refers to individuals' experiences of such policies on a day-to-day basis.

In their everyday work the lecturers act as a form of 'mediating force' between macro-governmental and meso-institutional stated aims for independent learners and the actual expectations of their students. This mediation becomes particularly important when there is dissonance between the levels. Thus, whilst the official rhetoric of the AVCE emphasises that:

“Learning is expected to be active and student-led, although directed by teachers and supported by professional and employer input” (www.qca.org.uk downloaded 19.07.05),

the students generally seek high amounts of help and guidance. In order to negotiate the difficulties of such dissonance, lecturers, to varying degrees of explicitness, form a ‘working agreement’ with their students, whereby under a set of largely tacit ‘rules’ they negotiate together the demands of the curriculum to achieve a qualification outcome (Avis *et al*, 2002). Such an agreement obviously involves areas of mutual self-interest otherwise it could not operate; however, it also involves areas of tension when one party is perceived not to be keeping its side of the ‘bargain’.

The pressures of performativity and the market

This section is concerned with how the lecturers positioned themselves in relation to what may be characterised as a ‘performative’ managerial regime (Ball 2003). A prominent theme that emerged spontaneously from the staff interviews was the importance that the staff attached to the retention of students and to their achievement in the form of qualification outcomes. Five of the nine lecturers cited high retention and achievement figures as evidence for the popularity of a particular module or of the AVCE in general, and two other lecturers cited retention and achievement as being part of the core purpose of the case study institution. Retention and achievement were placed by some staff members within the context of a strongly competitive educational market.

The interviewees’ concerns with retention and achievement are firmly echoed in the official discourse of the College itself. The College’s ‘Learning and Teaching Strategy 2002—2005[§]’, for instance, declares that:

“The award of ‘Centre of Vocational Excellence’ status to two curriculum areas was also predicated on the quality of learning and teaching and its outcomes in high levels of student retention and attainment. The College encourages a highly ‘student-centred’

[§] For reasons of anonymity, a full reference has not been given for this document. The author will be happy to supply a suitably anonymised copy if requested.

approach for all learning, teaching and support of students” (pp.2-3).

The same document also makes it clear that the College is operating in a market for qualifications and so teaching and learning must be a priority if student numbers are to be maintained:

“It is recognised that failure to address these issues [learning and teaching] could result in a loss of competitiveness and a decline in student numbers.” (p.3)

Staff comments emphasise a perceived need to offer a ‘value-added’ AVCE through ‘additional’ qualifications. The ‘Additional’s are the short (between one day and one week) qualifications that are offered in addition to the compulsory academic modules. They offer the students a basic training in certain important areas of the tourism industry such as cabin crew, ticketing or basic travel agency work. The qualifications are certified by industry bodies themselves, and in some cases are a minimum requirement for particular positions. ‘Additional’s are perceived to have value in retaining former FE students on HE courses and in positioning the College’s provision away from that of ‘competitor’ schools and colleges:

“It [provision of additional courses] is a selling point for us and when we sort of promote the college at Open Days we say those sort of things really. It really sells it cos they’re getting a lot more, you know, than just the basic qualification that lots of other colleges do and I think that, you know, brings the students in and impresses the parents and again it’s adding to that word of mouth, isn’t it, promoting the college.” (BM: ‘White British’ Female Tourism Lecturer)

For Ball (2003) the sorts of practices described above are best understood through the concept of performativity, which he describes as:

“...a technology, a culture and a mode of regulation that employs judgements, comparisons and displays as means of incentive, control, attrition and change—based on rewards and sanctions

(both material and symbolic). The performances (of individual subjects or organizations) serve as measures of productivity or output, or displays of 'quality', or 'moments' of promotion or inspection. As such they stand for, encapsulate or represent the worth, quality or value of an individual or organization within a field of judgement." (Ball, 2003: 216)

For Ball (2003) managerial and entrepreneurial modes of control are changing what it means to be a teacher. Ball (2003: 218) draws an explicit distinction between the 'old' professionalism based upon "*ethics of professional judgement and co-operation*" and the 'new' ethics of "*competition and performance*". A new language has produced new subjectivities and roles in which teachers and lecturers have been re-positioned as "*producers, providers, educational entrepreneurs and managers*" (2003: 218).

It is clear that the lecturers *do* feel a keen sense of individual responsibility for student retention and achievement and adopt pragmatic strategies to 'get students through'. To this extent then, it could be argued that they appear to have assimilated the subjectivities of a performative teaching culture. At the same time however, the 'sense of self' that the interviewees displayed did not amount to a simple process of de-professionalisation or of re-professionalisation into a new teaching paradigm. Instead, I would concur with Avis (1999: 253) that arguments about the effects of performativity are not in themselves sufficient and need to be set alongside another set of arguments about the nature of knowledge, teaching and learning and how these feed into the discussion about teachers' work. In brief, Avis (1999: 255) argues that it is possible to discern a transformation of the relations of post-compulsory teaching and learning towards 'learner control' of the pedagogic process, with teachers being constituted as 'facilitators'. This shift is reflected in a rhetoric which celebrates 'learner empowerment' (Avis, 1999:254) and is also expressed in curricular reforms such as modularisation. Avis goes on to argue that in tandem with an increased scrutiny of teachers' work, there remains a genuine interest in improving teaching and learning as, the "*dialogic, reflexive and related models of praxis' entailed by the interest in pedagogical practice does open up progressive possibilities*" (1999:260).

The lecturers who were interviewed certainly have a commitment to being 'learner-centred' in their practice. Furthermore, there was no sense in any of the interviews that the lecturers felt their practice had been rendered inauthentic or their core

pedagogical values challenged in the way described by Ball (2003). I would go further than Avis (1999) to argue that there is a strong sense in which the pressures of an outcome-related performativity can cohere with a commitment to a learner-centred pedagogy that can foster progressive teaching practice. In other words, a need to ‘get students through’ may actually be a driver for innovative teaching and a more dialogic form of teacher-learner relations, a point made by AM:

“I’m a firm believer that if they come into a lesson they should enjoy it cos they’re not going to remember it if they’re bored to tears. They remember at the end of the day and they pass so I don’t mind making a fool of myself so long as they get through. And it does, it breaks barriers you know. The more approachable you are the more likely they are to come and see you.” (AM: ‘White British’ Female Lecturer)

Staff perceptions of the AVCE

To do full justice to the views of the lecturers, staff perceptions of the AVCE need to be subdivided into two sections for analysis.

The AVCE as an accepted credential within the Travel and Tourism Industry and as a route into Higher Education

Staff perceptions of the AVCE reflected a degree of ambivalence about the identity of the qualification. Seven of the nine interviewees asserted that the AVCE was a good route into HE because it offered adequate academic preparation and it was a recognised qualification for that purpose:

“Yes, I think it is [a valuable stepping stone to HE] in terms of marking and grading, in terms of time schedules, working with teams, all those sort of social skills as well. Yes, it does prepare them for HE” (‘BM’ Female Lecturer: ‘Asian or Asian British Indian’)

Five of the nine interviewees also offered comments to the effect that the AVCE was useful for getting a job in the travel and tourism industry.

“It’s not...we get asked the same question every year, will my son or daughter get a job? We say, well we can’t guarantee but, you know, it [AVCE] certainly gives them a cutting edge, a leading edge, you know, if they’ve got...if they can offer that qualification.”
(‘JF’ Male Lecturer: ‘White British’)

Thus, a majority of the lecturers appeared to accept that the AVCE in Travel and Tourism is a useful qualification for entry into the Travel and Tourism industry and also as a route into higher education. They seem, therefore, to accept the official discourse on the AVCE qualification as promoted by the examining board Edexcel (2003: 1):

“Advanced Vocational Certificates of Education have been designed to provide a broad education as a basis for further training, further and higher education or for moving into employment. This is achieved by ensuring that students develop the general skills, knowledge and understanding that underpin a range of occupations or professions.”

At the same time however, five of the nine interviewees also suggested that employers within the travel and tourism industry can get confused about the qualifications that college leavers may have. The following comment refers to this issue in general terms:

“And I suppose with these rapid changes in qualifications is really how the industry is going to actually take these, look at these. Ermm, as far as I get...I get the impression that a lot of, a lot of the people in the travel business are not a lot up to date with what’s happening in education, the changes in the qualifications. So...yeah, I think it might be difficult for students to explain later on, I mean they don’t know that much about their qualification, they don’t know why it’s been disregarded and something else’s gone in its place instead, so I think that might cause a few problems.” (‘SW’: Female Lecturer: ‘White British’)

It is apparent, therefore, that the staff do not appear to accept the part of the official EdExcel (2003: 15) discourse which argues that:

“The Advanced VCE (Double Award) in Travel & Tourism has been developed in consultation with the industry to ensure that students are able to progress into employment.”

The Vocational and Academic Aspects of the AVCE

The lecturers' perceptions of the AVCE as a qualification were also underpinned by more deep rooted assumptions regarding the division between academic and vocational learning and their normative assumptions about who the students are and what form of learning is appropriate to them. The elements of the AVCE which the lecturers identified as being of greatest value to the students were the 'additional's and the work placements. Again, this perception by staff echoed the opinions offered by a large number of students, although this tended to divide along ethnic lines (see Chapter Five for discussion).

“Errm but I think the industry tend to go more for the main programme but also to look for the extra qualifications, such as the Fares and Ticketing, the Galileo the ABTACs, the things that they recognise, that they have to take themselves.” (BL: 'White British' Female Tourism Lecturer)

Work placements were seen as important because they enable the students to 'sell themselves' to the industry and they allow for a realistic experience of working life that the classroom can not simulate: The following comment illustrates this:

“Also, you know, they get experience on trips in year two. This year they went to Portugal. Last year I went with the students to Cyprus and they got really good experience there, you know, real world experience dealing with customers which improves their communication skills, you know.” (AN: 'White British' Female Tourism Lecturer)

The lecturers, in emphasising the value to the students of such experiential and 'real life' learning and, furthermore, in connecting this learning firmly to the occupational requirements of the travel and tourism industry, are drawing upon and reflecting certain strands within wider 'new vocationalist' discourses of education and training.

The origins of these discourses, which foreground such concepts as ‘relevance’ and ‘lifelong learning’ have been discussed in detail in Chapter Two. The tensions and contradictions inherent in the discourses and policies have also been explored. In addition, I want to suggest that there is also a specific set of tensions and contradictions surrounding curricular content and pedagogic practice and that these are realised through competing discourses of what constitutes a valid vocational education.

Specifically, there are tensions between a conception of vocational education which emphasises the promise of direct curricular relevance to industry and a conception of vocational education that emphasises process, that is, ‘learning to learn’, rather than subject content. The AVCE Travel and Tourism qualification embodies these tensions, for as a vocational ‘A’ level, it aims to offer a broader based vocational education than that offered by NVQs and to “*foster imaginative and critical thinking as well as the acquisition of knowledge*” (EdExcel, 2003:10). On the other hand, this AVCE, also attempts to develop “*practical technical skills pertinent to the travel and tourism industry*” (EdExcel, 2003:10). The comments of the lecturers, with their emphasis upon the value of specific industrial skills and experience, would seem to indicate that their understanding of a vocational education is closer to the ‘relevance’ form of discourse.

Staff perceptions of the Students

As with the other sections, this aspect is best dealt with under a number of subheadings.

A construction of the students as practical people

In line with the staff positioning of the AVCE qualification as a ‘practical’ qualification, the staff positioned the students themselves as ‘practical’:

“They’re not, you know, the true academics that they can sit there and they can be talked at, you know, time and time again, and just write this down, write this down. That isn’t what they’re like. They want to be doing things, so, you know, showing them videos, you

know, giving them questions. We do lots of quizzes over here. Like a pub quiz in relation to their subjects". ('AM': 'White British' Female Lecturer:)

Associated with this perspective was the belief that the students most enjoy and see the relevance of the 'additional's', the industry-specific short courses:

"They loved the resort rep, really enjoyed that. Because...we actually made them do a Welcome Meeting in front of everybody else and they could do whatever they wanted to do. Some of them put a dance together, some of them put a little sketch together."
('AM': 'White British' Female Lecturer)

Here again, these two perspectives—the practical student who learns best through practical studies—closely resonates with the opinions expressed by many of the students, as discussed in Chapter Five. In essence, the staff are making a distinction between 'thinking' and 'doing', 'thinkers' and 'doers' and between 'knowing that' and 'knowing how' (and so between 'academics' and 'practical people'). This is despite such a distinction being fundamentally untenable as it not so much represents different forms of knowledge as different 'evidential conditions' of the claims to be made for the 'knowledgeable states' of others (Lum, 2003:3). Furthermore, Pring (1993:71) argues that practical activities require intelligent understandings that may be made explicit and come to form theory. For the purposes of this study however, the arguments concerning the epistemological validity of the distinction are less important than the social implications of its historical translation into different curricular forms.

Theoretical or propositional knowledge has traditionally been associated with a 'liberal' education (Pring, 1993). The liberal ideal is characterised by an "...*initiation into forms of understanding which requires no external justification and which best takes place far removed from considerations of utility*" (Pring, 1993:51). The defining characteristic of this form of education therefore, is its emphasis upon a liberal, person centred enrichment (Williams, 1994:95-6). By contrast, practical knowledge is associated and often conflated with a vocational education, justified by a reference to external utility (Pring, 1993:61).

Therein lies the importance of the social distinction between the two forms of knowledge. The utility of vocational knowledge implies a material ‘brutish necessity’ on the part of those who gain it, while the disinterestedness of academic knowledge implies a ‘distance from necessity’ (Bourdieu, 1986a: 254). Thus, the two forms of knowledge translate into distinct curricula which readily correlate with, and are reproductive of, a wider social class hierarchy (Willis, 1978). As Pring (1993: 54) notes, the ideal of a liberal education “...*has dominated the formation of our educational institutions at every level and the shape and content of learning promoted by them*”. This social dominance is to be found in the power exerted by the universities over school curricula (Pring, 1993: 55-6). By contrast, from its 19th century roots in the apprenticeship system, vocational education has developed in a fragmentary fashion, emphasising the practical and thus traditionally suffering from low status (Green, 1997: 72).

In Bourdieusian terms, academic knowledge and associated credentials confer a form of symbolic capital upon the holder: it is knowledge that is recognised as legitimate within the fields of education and the higher levels of labour markets and which can be converted into economic gain. Vocational education does not have a history of such legitimacy within those fields. This is partly due to the structural conditions of post-16 provision which remain clearly divided between identifiably academic qualifications and vocational qualifications (Hodgson and Spours, 1999). It could also be argued that curricular reforms to post-16 VET (such as the introduction of competence-based qualifications) and the accompanying discourse of skills, have had the effect of exacerbating the vocational-academic divide (Moore and Hickox, 1994: 291)

These tensions and contradictions—between the rhetoric of parity of esteem and the reality perceived by the staff interviewees—may in turn be seen as indicative of the compromise and negotiation required to hold together the different interest groups that comprise the ‘social bloc’ associated with what Avis (1999: 254) terms the ‘educational settlement’. It has been argued, for instance, that the reluctance of the New Labour government to reform ‘A’ levels can be attributed to a desire not to alienate their middle class support (Hodgson and Spours, 1999: 136). This reminds us that such hegemony is always a lived process, and as Williams (1977: 112) argues, “*It*

is a realized complex of experiences, relationships and activities with specific and changing pressures and limits”.

The lecturers’ ascription of a ‘practical’ subject position to the students should therefore be seen in the context of an education and training system which is still predicated upon a division between academic and vocational learning. The rhetoric of parity of esteem rehearsed in official discourse does not meet with the lecturers’ lived experiences of a divided education system. Moreover, the lecturers’ acceptance of the ‘natural’ division between vocational and academic learning may, in Bourdieu’s (1990) terms, be considered a form of misrecognition since it celebrates academic knowledge and credentials within the fields of education and the labour market whilst failing to recognise the fundamental processes of social differentiation reproduced through such distinctions of knowledge.

Aesthetic and Emotional Labour in the development of a Vocational Habitus

Aesthetic and emotional labour, and their role in the development of an appropriate ‘vocational habitus’ (Colley *et al*, 2003) among individual students, are at the heart of the teacher—student interaction that forms the institutional habitus of the case study institution. Through their role in the development of aesthetic and emotional labour as preparation for the demands of service-level positions within the travel and tourism industry, the staff are ultimately complicit in the reproduction of classed and gendered identities and inequalities.

The definition of emotional labour which has guided this analysis is that offered by Hochschild (2003:7) who defines emotional labour as processes designed to “...*induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others—in this case, the sense of being cared for in a convivial and safe place*”. Hochschild’s (2003) definition is particularly pertinent to the labour required for work within the travel and tourism industry since it stemmed from her research on flight attendants. The definition can be interpreted as encompassing the travel and tourism industry’s requirements for people with outgoing, sociable dispositions but also covers the need for the ability to empathise and provide comfort to clients.

My understanding of aesthetic labour begins from a definition from Nickson *et al* (2003: 185) who describe it as:

“...a supply of embodied capacities and attributes possessed by workers at the point of entry into employment. Employers then mobilise, develop and commodify these capacities and attributes through processes of recruitment, selection and training, transforming them into ‘competences’ and ‘skills’ which are then geared towards producing a ‘style’ of service encounter deliberately intended to appeal to the senses of customers, most obviously in a visual or aural way”.

This definition captures the way in which aesthetic labour can be appropriated for commercial ends. At the same time however, it fails to sufficiently convey the essentially gendered nature of this form of labour that is performed predominantly by women for the benefit of men within a patriarchal system of gender relations. It is this understanding of aesthetic labour, as a site for the reproduction of gender inequalities, that is particularly useful for this research.

Aesthetic Labour

When asked why there were very few males on the AVCE course (relative to the overall gender balance within the case study college), the common staff reply was that the AVCE simply reflects the gender bias of the industry:

“Cos travel and tourism is predominantly female really. You know, when you see the reps and the cabin crews it’s nearly always female. I mean there are males there obviously but it’s females that they put forward. If you go to a travel agent it’s not very often you’ll see a man.” (‘AM’: ‘White British’ Female Lecturer)

In particular, it was argued that most of the AVCE students enter the course with the aim of working as cabin crew or holiday representatives, both strongly identified as ‘female’ jobs:

“Because when we interview the students when they first come here and you ask them what they want to do...well, ninety-eight percent of them say they want to be air cabin crew or holiday reps and that's predominantly female.” (‘BL’: ‘White British’ Female Lecturer)

The gendered nature of the industry implies particular feminised aesthetic labour. Four of the nine interviewees considered that frontline customer service positions, particularly air cabin crew, require an ‘appropriate’ physical appearance on the part of their (mostly) female workforce. In the comment below ‘AE’ makes the gendered argument explicit when she said,

“I think it's the whole glamorous thing again really. The fact that, you know...I mean, lads are different aren't they? Yes they like to look smart and that but the girls seem to see it as a...like a kind of a showpiece if you like. You know, you have to have your hair a certain way, you have to have your make-up a certain way, you have to dress certain ways. You're very much on show, very much outgoing and women like that, they seem to like that sort of feel, if you like.” (‘AE’: ‘White British’ Female Lecturer)

In appearing to accept the industry as female-dominated, and in accepting that positions such as cabin crew or holiday representatives are ‘female’ jobs that require a certain ‘glamorous’ appearance, the lecturers are also helping to reproduce gender and class inequalities through an emphasis upon ‘bodywork’, a term used by Tyler and Abbott (1998: 434) to describe how,

“...as a flight attendant a woman must achieve and maintain a particular state of embodiment, prescribed primarily according to an instrumentally imposed concept of a ‘feminine’ aesthetic and practised largely according to constraint, containment and concealment.”

Similarly, Adkins (1995) in her studies of workers in a hotel and a leisure park found that men and women were qualitatively different employees in that they were recruited and employed on very different grounds. Men were able to lay claim (and be seen to lay claim) to a job on occupationally specific grounds while women were

constructed as a distinct and unitary group of workers whose primary labour market asset was their appearance (Adkins, 1995: 112). This reading of 'gender as performance' is consonant with Butler's (1999) concept of gender performativity. Butler takes an anti-essentialist stance in arguing that gender ought not to be construed as a stable identity or locus of agency from which we construct our social practice (1999: 179). Instead,

"...gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a stylised repetition of acts. The effect of gender is produced through the stylisation of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and styles of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self." (1999: 179 original emphasis)

Gender is thus a 'performative accomplishment' (Butler, 1999: 179) in which the actors themselves come to believe and to perform in that mode of belief. This naturalization of a feminine 'ideal' has two separate but closely related implications. Firstly, the preoccupation with an attractive physique and the dietary regime required to achieve it,

"...functions as one of the most powerful normalizing strategies and sources of the reproduction of gender inequalities in contemporary western societies, ensuring the reproduction of gendered, self-disciplining 'docile bodies' " (Tyler and Abbott, 1998: 438).

A second point to note is that because the work of the flight attendant is so closely associated with women, much of the work is rendered invisible and therefore not recompensed. The more an occupation is associated with female employment, the lower its status and remuneration, as Bourdieu (1986a: 108) observes:

"...an increase in the proportion of women indicates the whole trend of an occupation, in particular the absolute or relative devaluation which may result from changes in the nature and organization of the work itself...or from changes in relative position in social space."

The link between ‘female’ employment and low wages was explicitly recognised by ‘AM’. Her comments, however, would seem to indicate that she has normalized this situation as an inevitable aspect of the gender division:

“If you go to a travel agent it’s not very often you’ll see a man and it’s a wage thing. You know, the wages aren’t good at all, unless you’re young, free and single and you just want to travel the world. For a man, really, cos you know a woman’s wage is normally the second wage. I have to say that’s changed a bit, you know, generally it’s always been a second wage for the holidays and things like that so they haven’t had to have such a good paid job. Whereas with men it’s always been the first wage, hasn’t it? And travel and tourism unless you go in at a high level...it’s the money.” (‘AM’: ‘White British Female Lecturer’)

Class also inheres with gender in the staff positioning of the students since the ideal feminine body is not just a gendered body but a classed body, carrying the markers of social class, as Bourdieu (1986a: 192) argues:

“Strictly biological differences are underlined and symbolically accentuated by differences in bearing, differences in gesture, posture and behaviour which express a whole relationship to the social world. To these are added all the deliberate modifications of appearance, especially by use of the set of marks—cosmetic (hairstyle, make-up, beard, moustache, whiskers etc.) or vestimentary—which, because they depend on the economic and cultural means that can be invested in them, function as social markers deriving their meaning and value from their position in the system of distinctive signs which they constitute and which is itself homologous with the system of social positions.”

Furthermore, certain body shapes and modes of bearing have greater social legitimacy than others and are associated with a greater moral worth. ‘Fat’ bodies imply a lack of self-discipline while bodies that have been ‘worked upon’ imply a degree of social and moral value. For Bourdieu (1986a: 193), the value that is accorded different bodily properties is congruent with their distribution within the different social classes:

“It is no accident that bodily properties are perceived through social systems of classification which are not independent of these properties among the social classes. The prevailing taxonomies tend to rank and contrast the properties most frequent among the dominant (i.e., the rarest ones) and those most frequent among the dominated.”

Skeggs (1997) employs a Bourdieusian analysis in her discussion of how class and gender intersect. Skeggs (1997: 100) argues that working class women find it difficult to ‘do’ femininity as it is a middle class construction from which they are excluded. To do femininity is to be “*silent, static, invisible and composed*” (1997: 100). Working class women can attempt to use femininity in order to convert their limited cultural and social capital into something more valuable. This process is always material and is followed due to a paucity of alternatives. Skeggs (1997: 104) however, argues that even women who become skilled at ‘doing’ femininity through fashion may find that they are only able to increase their stock of cultural capital at the local level (i.e., within their habitual social circle); it is unlikely that they will be able to convert their facility into a form of symbolic capital. This is because femininity is a public performance dependent upon the validation of others, but one which will depreciate in value with age (1997: 107).

It is an understanding of my analytical framework, as outlined in Chapter Three, that subjectivities are produced through experiences which are themselves mediated through the discourses—the frameworks of understanding—that are available to us to interpret and understand our experiences. Femininity is one such powerful discourse and thus a source of knowledge to the staff and female students (Skeggs, 1997). The student experiences prior to and during the AVCE course, (including experiences of lecturers), are also powerful sources of knowledge to themselves. It is quite possible, therefore, that femininity functions for at least some of the female students in the same way that sociability does for the ‘White’ female students of FG1, as I discuss in Chapter Five.

Emotional Labour

This section is concerned with the development of a set of ‘appropriate’ interpersonal dispositions among the students. A ‘sociable’ and ‘outgoing’ disposition was valued by the staff interviewees because it was felt that these qualities were what the industry would require of front-line service workers:

“I think we get the outgoing students which are the ones we need really to go into the travel industry cos it’s very much a sociable, you know, bubbly personalities, outgoing people that the travel industry need and want.” (‘BL’: ‘White British’ Female Tourism Lecturer)

Great importance was also attached by staff to the students’ ability and willingness to work in teams. Teamwork is not only a prescribed curriculum objective, but also a broader concept articulated as a disposition to be sociable within the industry:

“You’ve got some students that will really, really excel and pull everybody with them to get them there and you get others who will perhaps look after themselves and just try and, you know, do the best that they can for themselves whilst trying to help the others.” (‘AE’: ‘White British’ Female Tourism Lecturer)

The lecturers saw an important part of their teacher role as the development of desired qualities in the students. This was achieved through activities inscribed in the formal curriculum of the AVCE—such as trips—or through more informal social activities involving the lecturers and students. The comment below talks about the value of trips:

[Staff/student trips] *“For a bonding, as a bonding exercise, you know, they really do come out themselves and they make friends...and it’s better cos they all help each other and it’s...there’s none of that, I’m not talking to her, I’m not talking to him. But that’s because they’re Travel and Tourism.”* (‘AM’: ‘White British’ Female Tourism Lecturer)

Finally, a common view was that male students, besides being in a minority, have the ‘choice’ either to conform to the paradigm of the outgoing and sociable student, or to ‘withdraw’ and become a ‘quiet’ student:

“Again, I think it’s a confidence thing. Cos there’s not many chaps on the course, err, either they get really pampered and a lot of attention or, you know, they’re sort of quiet and perhaps might feel a bit uncomfortable.” (‘BM’: ‘Asian or Asian British Indian’ Female Tourism Lecturer)

The importance that the interviewees attach to teamwork and the development of confident and sociable students reflects both official discourses on post-16 teaching and learning and also academic research in education. Colley (2004: 1) perceives an increased interest in emotionality and ‘human connection’ in such concepts as ‘emotional literacy’ and initiatives such as ‘circle time’ in schools, whilst academic interest is demonstrated through the concept of ‘emotional intelligence’ (2004: 2). A concern with such ‘soft skills’ also underlies the introduction of key skills to the post-16 curriculum (Colley, 2004; Avis, 1999). The College itself, through its Learning and Teaching Strategy 2002—2005, also places emphasis upon the development of ‘soft’ skills alongside ‘hard’ skills:

“They [students] must also acquire the transferable skills that they will be expected to deploy when they enter employment—skills such as problem solving, IT, interpersonal/group working, numeracy, written communication and time management.”
(College’s ‘Learning and Teaching Strategy’ 2002—2005: 5)

At the same time, there is a disjunction between the official and the hidden curriculum. Whilst official discourse celebrates learners who can work in teams, build relationships and communicate effectively (see for example, DfES, 2005), the acquisition and application of these skills is often viewed in unproblematic technocratic terms with little, if any, reference to the social situatedness of learning or to differential employment opportunities. By contrast, the importance the lecturers attach to sociability, confidence and team working forms a less overt curriculum that is linked to the development of emotional labour. These capabilities, as with those of

aesthetic labour, are both constitutive and reproductive of classed and gendered identities and inequalities.

For the AVCE students, emotional labour skills form the core of an idealised 'vocational habitus' that is bound by class and gender constraints (Colley *et al*, 2003). The lecturers' emphasis upon confidence, sociability and teamwork is an attempt to inculcate a set of dispositions—a vocational habitus—necessary for employment in face-to-face customer service roles (rather than, for example, management roles). The emphasis upon a sociable persona is particularly important for holiday representative jobs where the worker has a considerably greater autonomy than most other customer service jobs but also a very blurred line between leisure and work (Guerrier and Adib, 2004: 340).

At the same time, unlike other vocational subject areas which have been the focus of research into the emotional labour that forms a part of the hidden curriculum (see for example Bates, 1990, 1991, 1994; Skeggs, 1997; Colley *et al*, 2003 on Care courses, and Colley *et al*, 2003 on Healthcare and Engineering), Travel and Tourism does not have a 'guiding ideology of practice' (Colley *et al*, 2003: 487) as discussed in Chapter Two. The process of gender and class orientation to a vocational habitus, and the role of the staff in this process, is therefore perhaps rather more opaque than was found by the studies indicated above. Nevertheless, the process is in effect and it serves to shape identities and dispositions. A discussion on the lecturers' comments about various individual students will illustrate this point.

Lecturer Accounts of Individual Students and Emotional Labour

In the staff interviews, it was considered useful to engage the staff by referring to specific students on the second year of the AVCE course. Two such students were 'JP', a 'White' male and 'LDD', a 'White' female. When questioned about these students, the lecturers regarded neither student as particularly academic and consequently did not expect them to go on to do an HE course, although one lecturer commented that she could see 'LDD' returning to education to do an HE course within a few years of leaving college. Rather, both students were positioned as essentially 'practical' students, and considered to have the potential to do well in the

travel and tourism industry. The attributes that made them employable, however, were constructed differently.

When questioned about 'LDD', the most frequent comments were that she was 'lovely' with 'good mannerisms'. She was also described as being 'pleasant' with a 'modest personality' and 'very considerate, caring'. Of the eight lecturers who offered comments about 'JP', four of them stated that he should be an 'entertainer'. This was explained by reference to his exuberant personality. Another lecturer simply said (jokingly) that he was a 'lunatic' and that he was 'cabin crew or rep' while another lecturer described him as '...a character. Very much the practical joker'.

One may see the differences in the comments as simply reflective of the lecturers' perceptions of the different personalities of the two students: both are 'practical' but one is more obviously extrovert than the other. Underlying the comments however, is an subconscious sense of attributes that are 'appropriate' to a masculine or feminine identity. The attributes that make the female student 'LDD' employable are those associated with emotional labour: an empathetic, modest personality skilled at the art of 'status enhancement' of others (Hochschild, 2003:171). By contrast, 'JP' is employable for almost exactly the opposite qualities: an outgoing personality that takes public stage and requires attention. The lecturers' positioning of these two students is therefore not blind to gender but is, in fact, helping to reproduce entrenched gendered identities.

The lecturers' positioning of 'JP' as an entertainer echoes his own ambitions in this respect. In my interview with him he said he 'would love to go on TV or film making'. 'JP' also clearly positioned the travel and tourism industry and the AVCE course, arguing that the AVCE was a 'girls' course' and a 'gay man's course'. He went on to assert that positions in air cabin crew or travel agencies were 'a woman's job' but that a tour representative position was 'definitely a lad's job'. 'JP' did not elaborate on why he thought a tour representative position was 'definitely a lad's job' but my interpretation is that a tour representative position would allow 'JP' to work in a female dominated industry while still being able to construct his position in terms of a traditional male identity as 'one of the lads'.

By contrast, the qualities which the lecturers identify in ‘LDD’—her capacity for emotional labour — were not the motivations which she herself cited for wishing to work in the travel and tourism industry. ‘LDD’ said that she wanted to travel and live abroad because she enjoyed the sensation of new experiences and challenges. She also said that she enjoyed learning from other cultures. Her ultimate aim was to own and run her own business, preferably a bar abroad. Her motivation for doing this was because:

“You’d say all the rules, you wouldn’t have to be told by anyone else. You employ your staff and, you know, you can do the hands-on, you could be working with them or you could be behind the scenes, so you can do either thing and you can have holidays and time off whenever you like.” (‘LDD’: ‘White British’ Female student: individual interview)

Her motivations therefore emphasised individual fulfilment and personal control. This contrasts quite markedly with the characteristics of emotional labour identified by the staff which emphasise self-sacrifice and self-effacement. Staff perspectives on emotional labour are, however, very much in line with findings by Guerrier and Adib (2004) from their study of the work of overseas tour representatives. Guerrier and Adib (2004) noted how female workers emphasize the emotional labour aspects of their duties and project an ‘acceptable’ image to their customers by refraining from heavy drinking on-duty and from sexual relationships with guests. By contrast, the young male workers attempted to project a ‘laddish’ image by a heavy indulgence in sex and alcohol in their work. Such differential constructions of the same occupational position have been found in research into other industries in which females have traditionally predominated (see for example: Simpson, 2005; Cross and Bagilhole, 2002; Williams, 1993).

Lecturer views on students and vocational habitus

As indicated above, because tourism covers such a wide occupational scope, it does not have a ‘guiding ideology of practice’ (Colley *et al*, 2003). Consequently, the AVCE in Travel and Tourism does not have a strong role in ‘filtering out’ students who are deemed unacceptable and in exposing them to a disciplinary socialisation. Nonetheless, a form of disciplinary socialisation is exerted by staff in relation to the

constructed gender norms of the vocational habitus. Staff comments on two other students illustrate this.

‘NP’ is a female student of ‘Black or Black British Caribbean’ origin in the second year of the AVCE with plans to study for a B.A in Airport Management at a London university for which she has a conditional offer. During the interviews with staff, it quickly became apparent that staff held an adverse view of ‘NP’. The principal comment about ‘NP’, voiced by five of the nine lecturers was that she was abrupt to the point of being abrasive in her dealings with both staff and fellow students. She was variously described as ‘bad mannered’, ‘very direct’ ‘back-chatty’ and ‘incredibly hard work’. Other lecturers described her as ‘a student who sails close to the wind’ and ‘very feisty’. Possibly the most charitable description of her was as a ‘lovable rogue’.

These comments suggest that ‘NP’ is being criticised for not displaying the requisite dispositions. Her outspokenness runs counter to the idealised vocational habitus which emphasises consensus-seeking emotional labour. In displaying a persona that declares unrepentantly ‘This is me’ (as one lecturer put it), ‘NP’ appears to be rejecting the role that is required of her, not simply as a Travel and Tourism student but also as a *female*. The contrast between the staff views of ‘NP’ and ‘JP’ would seem to offer support for this thesis. ‘JP’s outspoken personality was acceptable in terms of a traditional masculine identity, allowing men who enter traditionally female employment to re-construct aspects of their occupational role in order to accommodate wider hegemonic notions of masculinity. ‘JP’s outspoken personality may offer him a ‘legitimate’ identity as an entertainer but at the same time it does not challenge the basic gender assumptions of what constitutes an idealised vocational habitus for a travel and tourism student. By contrast, ‘NP’s outspokenness is not acceptable because it *does* challenge gender assumptions: her role is to provide emotional labour, she has no legitimate role as an entertainer.

The strength of gendered assumptions in the vocational culture of the AVCE may also be seen in the lecturers’ positioning of ‘MT’. ‘MT’ is a male student of ‘Black or Black British Caribbean’ origin in the second year of the AVCE course who intended to stay at the case study college to study a degree in Tourism Business Management. Of the eight interviewees who offered comments about ‘MT’, seven described him as

‘lovely’. This adjective was repeated several times by some interviewees. He was also described by one interviewee as ‘well mannered’ and by another as ‘a people person, very gentle guy’.

The repeated use of the word ‘lovely’ applied to ‘MT’ carries with it strong implicit gender assumptions. ‘MT’ is described as ‘lovely’ because he displays a strong disposition towards emotional labour skills. The fact that he is a ‘gentle guy’ makes him a ‘people person’. In this sense, it might be argued that he does not display traditional masculine qualities, but instead displays a more ‘feminine’ persona. Indeed, one lecturer, ‘BM’ (an Asian female) described him as ‘not your stereotypical image of a black lad’. The fact that ‘MT’ is a male student yet has a facility for emotional labour does not challenge the gendered vocational culture of the AVCE. Indeed, the lecturers’ positioning of ‘MT’ in such terms actually serves to reinforce gendered assumptions.

Of course, a level of caution must be applied to any arguments made here, for such comments only *hint* at the processes and outcomes. More research is needed to further support the arguments (although that is beyond the scope of this present research). For the present, it may be sufficient to note that the relative opacity of the processes I have described will mean that change will be very difficult. The tutors themselves are immersed in the vocational culture of travel and tourism, having worked in the industry before becoming teachers. Thus they tend to normalize the gender and class stereotyping inherent in aesthetic and emotional labour. The normalization of these processes is what renders them opaque and thus difficult to change, or as Bourdieu (1977: 188) argues, “*The most successful ideological effects are those which have no need of words, and ask no more than complicitous silence*”.

Conclusion

The data presented within this chapter indicate areas of overlapping understanding between staff and students and also areas of congruence between official discourses and staff discourses. However, the data also indicate areas of tension and dissonance. An area of congruent understanding between staff and students seems to be evident in the co-construction of a ‘practical’ subject position for the students. Closely related to this is the privileging by both staff and students of the more visibly job-related aspects

of the course. Thus, a discourse which tends to celebrate the 'practical' student who requires 'practical' knowledge which will make them employable is common currency among both staff and students. To an extent, as I have argued, this reflects official concerns with employability and the 'relevance' of PCET. However, it could also be argued that in constructing the AVCE as a primarily practical course, the staff and students are rejecting official discourses of parity of esteem between the academic and vocational routes. In Bourdieusian terms, the celebration of the practical within the AVCE curriculum, and of the 'practical' student, is a form of misrecognition that legitimates and thus masks the processes of social inequality and domination that the division of knowledge constitutes and reproduces.

Another area in which staff and student perceptions converge is the value placed upon close staff-student ties. There was also evidence here, however, of tensions on the staff side between their desire to give support and their attempts to inculcate more independent learning habits in the students. It was also argued that staff-student relations entailed a degree of pragmatism on both sides but could not simply be reduced to this. In fact, there was evidence that the pedagogic and pastoral support the staff offered the students was underwritten by a holistic sense of professionalism. This sense of professionalism was linked in a complex way to the demands of a performative teaching culture in that requirements for retention and achievement may actually help to drive innovative teaching and close pastoral support.

Evidence from the interview data also suggests that processes of gender and class positioning and reproduction are being enacted by staff and students on the AVCE. These processes are being realised through a vocational culture which celebrates the practical over the academic. It is also a culture in which the emphasis upon sociability serves to socialise the female students into becoming proficient providers of emotional labour. The gendered assumptions associated with emotional labour help to position the AVCE in Travel and Tourism as a 'female' course. A similar process may be observed with regard to aesthetic labour. Again, following a Bourdieusian analysis, we can see that emotional and aesthetic labour are processes of misrecognition in that they legitimate and normalize gendered and classed inequalities. The processes of inequality which the vocational culture of the AVCE in Travel and Tourism helps to reproduce will then be generalised within the workforce of the travel and tourism industry; thus, the gendered nature and composition of the

AVCE and of the travel and tourism industry itself reflect one another in a dialectical relationship.

Having thus considered staff perspectives, Chapter Five will present data from research on the student samples.

Chapter Five: Student Positioning and Educational Discourses

Introduction

Having presented the findings from the staff interviews in Chapter Four, this chapter now presents the findings from the research with the student samples. The data presented here is derived from the questionnaire, focus groups and individual student interviews. The research was undertaken as I was interested in understanding the construction of personal agency of individual students and groups of students in the context of the dual structural enablements and constraints arising from race, class and gender. I have sought to critically review an assumption that the ontologically prior structural positioning of the students in this study leads to differential access to, and sensemaking of, discourses related to education and employment. Furthermore, given personal agency, the students' personal positioning should in turn be mediated through their ongoing personal experiences of social institutions, particularly the family and educational establishments. Student sensemaking is thus both socially situated and subject to movement and change.

A large quantity of data was obtained from the student focus groups, individual interviews and the initial questionnaire. I reduced this data by identifying which was most relevant to my research questions and as a result have structured this chapter into three principal sections. The first reports on the social class, gender and racial backgrounds of the students. The next section, 'Sub-Group Results' is sub-divided into four separate subsections based on the themes extracted from the focus groups and individual interviews. These subsections are:

- Continuing with education after 16;
- Perceptions of the AVCE;
- Peer group socialising;
- Attitudes to higher education and the labour market.

In the final section (Individual Life Histories), I will use data from the individual student interviews to construct more detailed exemplars of the social positioning of the students.

Composition of the Student Sample

As indicated in Chapter Three, the sample for the questionnaire research was the first and second year cohorts of the AVCE in the year 2003-04. Given the college's decision to discontinue the AVCE in favour of a BTEC award, the sample for the focus group and individual interview research became the (now) second year cohort of the AVCE (2004-05). A breakdown of ethnicity and gender within these samples is given in Tables 5.1 and 5.2 below. It will be seen that the samples in both tables are overwhelmingly female, and that the 'White' ethnic group is numerically dominant within each. In fact, 'White' female students form the majority of students in both samples. The second largest ethnic group is the 'Asian or Asian British Indian' group which is also predominantly female in composition. The third largest group is the 'Black or Black British Caribbean' group, which is evenly split between males and females within the AVCE Year Two sample (Table 5.1 p.109), but within the Questionnaire and AVCE Whole Cohort samples (Table 5.2 p.110) it is predominantly female.

Table 5.1: AVCE Travel and Tourism Year 2 2004—05: Gender and Ethnic Group Composition

Ethnic Group	Males	Females	Totals
White*	4.35% (n=2)	52.17% (n=24)	56.52% (n=26)
Asian or Asian British Indian	0	15.22% (n=7)	15.22% (n=7)
Asian or Asian British Pakistani	4.35% (n=2)	(2.17% (n=1)	6.52% (n=3)
Black or Black British Caribbean	6.52% (n=3)	6.52% (n=3)	13.04% (n=6)
Other Asian Background	2.17% (n=1)	2.17% (n=1)	4.35% (n=2)
Other*	0	4.35% (n=2)	4.35% (n=2)
Totals	17.4% (n=8)	82.6% (n=38)	100% (n=46)

* Please note that, with specific reference to the above data, the term 'White' includes 'White British' and 'Other White Background' and the term 'Other' includes 'Other Ethnic Background' and 'Mixed White and Asian'.

Table 5.2: Questionnaire and AVCE Whole Cohort 2003-04 Samples: Gender and Ethnic Group Composition

QUESTIONNAIRE SAMPLE			
ETHNIC GROUP	MALES	FEMALES	TOTALS
White*	11.11% (n=8)	58.33% (n=42)	69.44% (n=50)
Asian or Asian British Indian	1.39% (n=1)	11.11% (n=8)	12.5% (n=9)
Black or Black British Caribbean	2.78% (n=2)	5.55% (n=4)	8.34% (n=6)
Other Ethnic Background*	1.39% (n=1)	4.17% (n=3)	5.55% (n=4)
Black or Black British African	0	1.39% (n=1)	1.39% (n=1)
Asian or Asian British Pakistani	1.39% (n=1)	0	1.39% (n=1)
Other Asian Background	0	1.39% (n=1)	1.39% (n=1)
Chinese	0	0	0
Other Black Background	0	0	0
TOTALS	18.06% (n=13)	81.94% (n=59)	100% (n=72)
AVCE TRAVEL AND TOURISM FIRST AND SECOND YEAR COHORTS 2003-04			
ETHNIC GROUPS	MALES	FEMALES	TOTALS
White*	7.25% (n=9)	54.03% (n=67)	61.28% (n=76)
Asian or Asian British Indian	3.22% (n=4)	12.1% (n=15)	15.32% (n=19)
Black or Black British Caribbean	2.42% (n=3)	5.65% (n=7)	8.07% (n=10)
Other Ethnic Background*	0	2.42% (n=3)	2.42% (n=3)
Black or Black British African	0.81% (n=1)	0	0.81% (n=1)
Asian or Asian British Pakistani	3.23% (n=4)	3.23% (n=4)	6.46% (n=8)
Other Asian Background	0.81% (n=1)	1.61% (n=2)	2.42% (n=3)
Chinese	0	1.61% (n=2)	1.61% (n=2)
Other Black Background	0	1.61% (n=2)	1.61% (n=2)
TOTALS	17.74% (n=22)	82.26% (n=102)	100% (n=124)

* Please note, that with specific reference to the above table, the term 'White' comprises 'White British' and 'Other White Background'. The term 'Other Ethnic Background' comprises 'Mixed White and Asian', 'Mixed White and Black Caribbean' and 'Other Mixed Background'.

It was also indicated in Chapter Three that I had been unable to assign socioeconomic classifications based on Office of National Statistics (O.N.S) categories to the questionnaire sample due to incomplete responses. I was, however, able to gain data on parental occupation from the samples for the focus group and individual interview research. This data is presented in Table 5.3 (p.110). It will be seen that a majority of the parents are clustered in ONS categories 4 to 9, that is, in skilled/semi-skilled manual work or in lower level service employment. Only a very small number of parents fall outside of this cluster—either in professional level service work or in unskilled manual positions.

Table 5.3: Focus Group and Individual Interview Samples: O.N.S Socio-economic Categories

* indicates those students who were also interviewed individually.

Focus Group 1					
Name	Ethnic Group	Father's Job	O.N.S Category	Mother's Job	O.N.S Category
LD*	WB	Bricklayer	5	Residential Lettings Manager	1
LM*	WB	Teacher (Head of Year Dept)	2	College Lecturer	2
AR	WB	Head Bar Steward	9	Sales/Purchase Ledger Clerk	4
LDD*	WB	Salesman	3	Secretary	4
LH*	WB	Polisher	5	Mortgage Advisor	3
Focus Group 2					
AH	WB	Accountant	2	Office worker	4
EL	WB	Engineer/Supervisor	2	P.A	4
KC	WB	Carpenter	5	Cashier	7
LB	WB	LGV Driver	8	Office worker	4
JH	WB	Trophy Manufacturer	5	--	--
DG	WB	Mechanical Rewinder	9	Classroom Assistant	6
Focus Group 3					
NP*	BBBC	Decorator	5	NHS Support Worker	6
SS	AABP	Butcher	5	Dinner Lady	9
MB*	BBBC	Electrician	5	Community Nurse	3
SF*	OAB	Factory Worker	9	Homemaker	--
SH	BBBC	Engineer	2	Nursery Nurse	6
TM*	AABI	Foodpacker	9	Homemaker	--
NPP	AABI	Manager of Jewellers	1	Works in a factory	9
Male Interviewees					
MT*	BBBC	Doctor	2	Social Worker	2
BM*	OAB	---	--	Homemaker	--
JP	WB	Solicitor	2	Receptionist	4
MTT	BBBC	Security Guard	9	Retired Nurse	--

Explanation of Terms: W = White British; BBBC = Black British Caribbean; AABI = Asian or Asian British Indian; AABP = Asian or Asian British Pakistani; OAB = Other Asian Background

Sub-Group Results

Continuing with education after 16

Accounts of the decision to continue with education after compulsory schooling revealed differences between students of the majority 'White British'^{**} group and those of the Asian^{††} groups. They also hinted at gender differences within the Asian groups. I have chosen to focus upon students from the 'White' group and those from the Asian groups in this section as I discerned the strongest differences between these two groups.

For the student interviewees of the majority 'White' group, further education appeared to offer a necessary 'breathing space' between school and future decisions in which they could reflect and mature. Some students felt that they had simply not been ready to enter the labour market, but instead wished to continue to enjoy the relative lack of responsibility enjoyed during their school years. The following quotation is illustrative of this:

"Mine was just a case of I thought I was going to go and work but then when it came to it I thought I don't want to be working yet, I want another two years of doing nothing really socialising with my mates and that's what it was" (LM: 'White British' Female FG1)

Other comments indicate a strong sense of uncertainty about the nature and scope of job options. Thus, further education became a means of deferring a decision until the student felt ready:

"No it wasn't always a decision for me I was, I would have thought that I would have got a job straight away but when it come to it I was thinking what actually am I going to go into? And I'd always wanted to do travelling and that so I thought I'll do two years and

^{**} All of the 'White' interviewees referred to in this section were of a 'White British' background and will henceforth be referred to as 'White'.

^{††} It is recognised that the use of the term 'Asian' is problematic as it runs the risk of disregarding many national, linguistic, regional and religious differences among people of South Asian origin. Descriptors that make reference to nationality (e.g., Pakistani) or religion, (e.g., Muslim) may sometimes be preferable. However, for clarity of reading, the term 'Asian' was employed within this analysis and encompasses the following ethnic groups: 'Asian or Asian British Indian', 'Asian or Asian British Pakistani', 'other Asian Background'. Where data gained from individual students is presented, the ethnic group of the particular student is clearly given.

then I can get my job then, that's what I always thought" (LDD: 'White British' Female: FG1)

These comments, and similar ones made by other interviewees of 'White' origin, indicate the strong subjective sense of personal agency felt by the students in their decision-making. When first questioned, all the participants used the pronoun 'I' in relating their decision to continue education after school and, at least initially, made no reference to any third party such as parents or teachers. This sense of agency stands in apparent contrast to the accounts offered by the students of Asian origin. Comments by Asian students indicated a perception that they were 'expected' to continue on to some form of further education. This sense of pressure derived from parental expectations (or at least from the students' perceptions of them) or because participants felt they had to 'compete' with siblings and near relatives:

"After, like, doing my GCSEs my parents expected me to carry on...cos, like, all my cousins are 'A' star students and I haven't done so well so they expect me to get somewhere" (NPP: 'Asian or Asian British Indian' Female FG3)

"I don't think they would have agreed with that [leaving school at 16 to get a job] cos my parents have always expected me to do education" (TM: 'Asian or Asian British Indian', Female individual interview)

The findings from the focus groups and individual interviews are supported by the questionnaire. With regard to question 14 about the students' motivations to attend the study institution, only 3.33% of 90 responses (n=3) indicated parental desire as their No.1 motivation. Two of the three responses however, were made by respondents of 'Asian or Asian British—Indian' origin (both female) while only one was made by the larger 'White' group.

The differences observed between the students of 'White' origin and the minority ethnic students should be seen as differences of degree and not as absolutes. Further questioning in the individual interviews revealed that the parents of all students played an important role in providing a "...general framework of aspirations and hopes for their children, a space within which choices are made and validated" (Ball

et al, 1999: 217). Mothers were particularly mentioned either as providing a general sense of encouragement and aspiration or as validating specific decisions by the student. This finding is consonant with a previous study by Reay (1998b) into parental involvement in children's primary schooling in which she found that mothers, rather than fathers, tended to carry the burden both of practical support for their children's education and of providing the 'emotional labour' necessary to support their children.

From the accounts given in the individual interviews, however, the parents of the 'White' students tend to be less overtly interventionist than the parents of the Asian students in their children's post-16 decision-making. The accounts of the 'White' students would seem to indicate that a framework for what is acceptable may be established, and specific choices will be validated or resisted, but the place of individual choice and responsibility is emphasised. The apparent contrast in attitudes may be viewed in terms of different perceptions of the pressures and limitations faced by the students in their decision-making. In Williams' (1977: 87) terms, the students and their parents are negotiating sets of 'positive determinations' (pressures, or 'push factors') and 'negative determinations' (limitations, or 'pull factors'). The students' and parents' understandings of such pressures and limitations and their (re)actions in relation to them have conduced to the 'decision' to go to college. Furthermore, these pressures and limitations intersect 'race', gender and class in complex ways as I shall illustrate. My argument here will be that 'race' appears to be the primary axis of differentiation within my sample and within race it is possible to discern emergent pressures and limitations of class and gender within and upon race. I will firstly consider the push and pull factors that I believe to be related to the Asian students within my sample and then I will consider those that appear to be connected to the group of 'White' students.

Evidence for the push and pull factors particular to race (as opposed to gender and class) are to be found in the hints of racism contained within my data. The subject of racism did not explicitly come up in the focus groups and interviews with the Asian students. Nevertheless, I would argue that the fear of racism is implicit in the clear contrast that some Asian students made between the quality of life that they believed could be gained through post-16 qualifications, and the alternative of low-paid work. For example, manual labour in factories was identified by one male and one female

interviewee as something that both they and their parents wished them to avoid by pursuing post-16 qualifications.

Such a stark dichotomy between the ‘good’ life gained through qualifications and a ‘poorer’ life without them was not apparent in the comments made by the ‘White’ students. My conclusion from this is that perception of the constraints of racism by minority ethnic parents and their children is acting as a form of pressure towards post-16 participation. Indeed, research (see for example, Ahmad, 2001 and Bhatti, 1999) offers plenty of evidence that Asian students and their parents are concerned with racism and see post-16 qualifications as a form of protection against it. For example, Ahmad (2001:141) argues that the aspirations of ethnic minority students for post-16 qualifications “...are often related to a realistic assessment of the indirect and institutionalised racism they can expect to face”. Similarly, Bhatti (1999) found evidence that Asian parents are increasingly concerned about employment opportunities for their children and place a great value on qualifications as a means of gaining advantage.

Moreover, there may be additional pressures of class and gender *within* race among my sample. Of the five Asian student interviewees, only one had a parent in a managerial/professional level job. The others were employed in manual or lower level service sector work and none of the parents had their own business. This may be important because there is evidence in the literature (see for example Bhatti, 1999 and Archer, 2003a) to suggest that there are particular pressures on the children of immigrant working class Asian parents to succeed academically. Bhatti (1999: 130-131) notes that the children of parents who do not have their own businesses to hand down will be under particular pressure to continue and succeed in education. This argument is supported in research by Archer (2003a: 131) into adolescent male Asian students. It is therefore possible to interpret the Asian students’ perceptions of parental expectations in the light of economic class pressures that operate within the larger, and perhaps more overt pressures of ‘race’.

Data from the individual interviews offers hints that gender also operates as an axis of social differentiation within race, and thus exerts its own push and pull factors. It is possible for example, that some of the female Asian students experience (or perceive) pressures for participation in post—16 education passed on by their mothers. There is

support for this interpretation in the literature. For example, Bhatti (1999: 138) reports that in families where the mother may have had little opportunity for education herself, she acted as an 'agent of change' in strongly encouraging her daughter to make use of educational opportunities that she herself did not have. These findings however, are contradicted by Ahmad (2001) who found that among the Muslim families in her sample, it was fathers, rather than mothers who promoted their daughters' education; furthermore, she found that the lower the level of the mother's education, the less inclined she was to encourage her daughter academically. My own findings however, support Bhatti (1999) rather than Ahmad (2001) although they are tentative in that only one interviewee (below) explicitly mentioned this form of gendered expectation/pressure:

"Cos my mum's educated as well. She goes, 'education's very important'. Because she got married in the early years as well and she left education because of marriage. She doesn't want the same thing to happen to me" ('SF': 'Other Asian Background' Female: individual interview)

It is possible, however, that other female Asian interviewees may have had similar experiences which they did not voice.

Having considered the push and pull factors related to the Asian students within my sample, I now wish to consider those related to the 'White' students. One may theorise the relatively greater subjective sense of agency of these students, and the apparently less directive involvement of their parents, in terms of their social class. It could be argued, for example, that the lack of a clear 'imagined future' (Ball *et al*, 1999) in relation to post-16 education which the students' comments at the start of this section seem to suggest, is a product of their class habitus. Indeed, this study has found evidence for the effects of class as an important variable, as detailed later in this chapter. In this section, however, I will discuss the 'White' students' comments in terms of their ethnicity and consider how this may interact with their economic class to produce particular outcomes.

All individuals occupy places in terms of class, race and gender. As Anthias (1998: 520) notes however, these divisions do not function in a coherent way and neither are they mutually exclusive. Instead, following the principle of hierachisation we can see

that a person may be dominant within one category ('White' in contrast to minority ethnic, for example) but subordinate within another (in terms of class or gender within their ethnic category). If we apply this to the 'White' and Asian AVCE students we can see that they share the same objective economic class but that in ethnic terms the 'White' students are in a dominant position—their 'whiteness' becomes a form of symbolic capital through processes of misrecognition, as discussed in Chapter Two. Thus, among the 'White' AVCE students, ethnic domination (as experienced in an absence of the fear of racism) articulates with their class subordination within the dominant group (as experienced through cultural and material constraints) to produce the particular set of positionings with regard to post-16 education discussed above. Here therefore, we begin to see the complexity of the interplay between social divisions, the hierarchical outcomes it produces for individuals, and the resistance or accommodation that people make in regard to these outcomes.

Perceptions of the AVCE

Perceptions of the value of the AVCE revealed quite marked differences between the majority 'White' group and the minority ethnic groups. The 'White' students identified the additional qualifications (see page 83 for an explanation of 'Additional') as the most useful element of the AVCE. The opinion was that the 'additional' were of greater use to them than the academic modules for future jobs in the travel and tourism industry and would give them a definite advantage over other applicants who did not possess such qualifications:

"And if we've got like a basic, like we're doing the cabin crew which is basic, obviously you've got to go into more depth training for it but that's gonna put you higher than someone that's been, what, doing 'A' levels or something totally different, English and Maths" ('LDD': 'White British' Female: FG3)

Eight 'White' interviewees (of twelve) mentioned the additional qualifications, in contrast to only three minority ethnic students (of ten) who instead tended to mention the 'academic' modules of the AVCE or the overseas visits. I conclude from this that the minority ethnic students place less value on the additional qualifications than the 'White' students because they are more likely to value the AVCE as a progression route into HE. Evidence from the questionnaire seems to support this interpretation. In

answer to question 16 which asked respondents for their reasons for doing the AVCE, 41% (n=12) of the responses which indicated the potential of the AVCE for progression to HE were from minority ethnic females. By contrast, only 14% (n=4) of responses in this category were from the much larger 'White' group of students.

The different evaluation of the AVCE suggests the adoption of different subject positions. The value that most of the 'White' students place upon the additional qualifications derives from their positioning of themselves as 'practical' rather than 'academic' people. When questioned about their memories of school subjects, the participants of focus groups 1 and 2 recalled learning best through 'practical' methods (such as discussion or role-play) or in 'practical' subjects (such as drama or home economics) rather than those subjects requiring more traditional reading and writing skills. This came across strongly in comments by several participants in focus group 1. Only one participant from focus group 2 made a similar comment although all the other participants either nodded or muttered assent to it. The comment below is typical:

"I was errrm I enjoyed school but I didn't like the whole like education part of it ok , no I did, but like I was more like practical I didn't like like loads of writing and exams and everything, I think that's why I chose to do this course. Cos it's more practical and there's a lot of chatting" (LDD: 'White British' Female FG1)

In one respect, such a positioning of themselves may be viewed as no more than a recognition by the participants of their particular learning dispositions. In constructing a practical persona for themselves, however, the students have come to naturalize what are in fact primarily socially inscribed subject positionings. Many commentators (Ball *et al*, 1999; Hodgson and Spours, 1997, 1999) have noted that educational 'choices', both pre and post-sixteen have traditionally been conditioned by an institutionalised split between the 'academic' and the 'vocational'. The 'White' students' positioning of themselves as 'practical' may be seen in the light of this dichotomy. The AVCE qualification however, was introduced into the curriculum in 2000 with the aim of improving the standing of general vocational education and to gain parity of esteem with 'A' levels (Hodgson and Spours, 1999: 118). Thus, in valuing the 'practical' aspects of the AVCE over the academic, the students have rejected these official and governmental discourses.

The work of Skeggs (1997) offers a way of understanding how students assess and prioritise the ‘academic’ and ‘practical’ elements *within* a course. Skeggs’ students— young working class women following a Care course—firmly prioritized the occupational side of the course over the academic. Skeggs (1997: 59) argues that in doing so, the women not only made an assessment of their own competence but also of the relevance of the knowledge itself for their perceived future positionings. The women came to see a ‘caring self’ as a ‘practical self’ and, thus, to naturalize their subject position, or, in Bourdieu’s (1977: 77) terms “*to love the inevitable.*”

The ‘White’ students of the AVCE in Travel and Tourism are, with the lecturers, partners in the co-construction of a similar process, albeit one that is perhaps not as stark as that perceived by Skeggs (1997). The organization of the AVCE curriculum has presented the students with a division of knowledge between the ‘practical’ and the ‘academic’, in which the practical has been celebrated. The inversion of the usual academic/practical hierarchy of worth may be seen as a way for the students to derive value and meaning from the AVCE curriculum.

Furthermore, as with Skeggs’ (1997) Care students, it may also be seen as the AVCE students’ assessment of the relevance of academic vs. practical knowledge for anticipated future career routes: the service-level positions which many of the AVCE students expect (and are expected) to enter are not perceived to require ‘academic’ knowledge or skills. This outlook, in turn, reflects the class habitus of many of the AVCE students.

Peer Group Socialising

Socialising within college emerged as an area of difference among the qualitative research samples. For the ‘White’ female participants of FG1 and the remaining ‘White’ male, peer group socialising appeared to be an important part of their lives at college. The following comment is typical:

“Ah, I love everyone here, [LDD: yeah, definitely] everyone in our year we get on with everyone in every class, [yeah] everyone is fantastic and from when we went to France last year on a school [inaud] I can’t believe how close everyone really is now it’s just

amazing [LM: especially since Benidorm]" ('LD': 'White British'
Female: FG1)

By contrast, peer group friendships did not appear to have the same degree of importance for the 'White' female participants of FG2, the minority ethnic female participants of FG3 or the minority male interviewees. Those students did not spontaneously mention the subject and, when prompted to do so, typically commented that they maintained a balance of friendship groups between college and elsewhere. Although these findings are inconclusive on this issue for all ethnic groups, findings from the questionnaire do offer evidence of some difference between 'White' and minority ethnic groups.

The responses to question 15 of the questionnaire indicated that 'White' students were much more likely than minority ethnic students to agree that their main group of friends was at the college. 72% (n=37) of 'White' respondents agreed with the statement against only 44% (n=4) of respondents of 'Asian or Asian British—Indian' origin and 17% (n=1) of respondents of 'Black or Black British—Caribbean' origin. It would seem to indicate that the college occupies a less important place in peer group socialising for the minority ethnic students of the questionnaire sample than for the majority 'White' group. This conclusion seems to be confirmed by further questioning in the individual interviews. The participants were asked if they would have continued their studies if they had not made friends with peers on the course. Three of the ten interviewees, all 'White' females, said that they did not think they would have continued on to the second year of the course without the support of good friends.

"No. Cos I wouldn't have wanted it to be like school at all. I'd have left if I hadn't liked it definitely. I wouldn't want to go through college on my own" ('LD': 'White British' Female: individual interview)

By contrast, the other seven interviewees said that they would have continued, even without good friends. Only one of this group of interviewees (a female) was 'White'. The other six interviewees were three participants of 'Black or Black British Caribbean' origin (two males and one female), one female of 'Asian or Asian British Indian' origin and one male and one female of 'Other Asian Background'. The following comment is typical, particularly of the female participants:

“I would have carried on with it just for the fact that I don't need friends to get me where I'm going cos they're not the ones who's gonna be paying me my money” ('NP': 'Black or Black British Caribbean' Female: individual interview)

I draw three inferences from the importance attached to sociality by the female students in FG1 as I shall now consider. Firstly, the development of supportive friendships acts as an important form of social capital for these students and appears to support their learner identities (Rees *et al*, 1997), particularly in times of stress. The comment above by 'LD' appears to support this interpretation. In this context therefore, sociality acts as a cultural resource of 'use-value' (Sayer, 2005; Skeggs, 2004b) to the students of FG1, that is, it is of intrinsic worth to them beyond its potential for exchange value (discussed below). The lesser emphasis upon peer group friendships among the minority ethnic participants may be viewed in the context of the relatively more robust learner identities which they appeared to display. These stronger learner identities are also evident in their comparatively greater orientation towards HE study (discussed later in this chapter).

Secondly, the emphasis placed on peer group socialising by FG1 students is related to their assumption of 'practical' subject positions, which are themselves related to the participants' perceptions of the demands of service-level occupations within the travel and tourism industry. Again, Skeggs' (1997) study of Care students offers an instructive comparison. The practical persona adopted by the Care students expressed itself as a resilient, 'no-nonsense' attitude to the physical and emotional demands of caring. In the case of the AVCE students of this study, however, this subject position finds expression in an emphasis upon 'people skills' rather than 'academic skills'. The students of FG1 are anticipating that it is these 'people' skills that will be required in service-level occupations. In this sense therefore, their sociality may be seen as a cultural resource which they are seeking to convert into a form of cultural capital which is of exchange value within the travel and tourism labour market. It is likely however, that their competencies will only be of value in front-line service positions and that they will not be able to convert their cultural capital into a form of managerial authority, that is, into symbolic capital. This may be explained by reference to the class and gender of the participants of FG1.

Hochschild (2003) and Adkins (1995), in their studies of women workers in the tourism and leisure industries, have revealed how women are employed on the basis of dispositions they are considered to 'naturally' possess, as well as their skills. Certain positions 'require' employees to display 'feminine' characteristics. Bodily display is one such characteristic, as is a certain type of sociable disposition. As Skeggs (2004b: 74) notes, the result of this naturalization of identity characteristics is that many female workers are not able to employ them as a mobile exchangeable resource and so may find it difficult to achieve an identity beyond that of 'woman worker'.

To this gender analysis I would add another structural constraint: the importance of class within and upon gender. The female participants of FG1 are working class and 'new' middle class and service-level positions in the travel and tourism industry are principally filled by women from these classes (Adkins, 1995). As Skeggs (1997, 2004b) notes, working class women have traditionally been positioned as the 'constitutive limit'. Their values and culture (or, at least, those which are ascribed to them) have been seen as 'value-less' in relation to middle class cultural norms and so the exchangeable value of female working class cultural practices within the symbolic economy can be very limited (Skeggs, 2004b: 2). Thus, the ability of the working class/lower middle class female participants of FG1 to generate exchangeable cultural capital from jobs in which they work alongside other working class/lower middle class female workers is likely to be limited.

My third argument is that student sociality may function as a site of resistance to hegemonic discourses on education and training that emphasise the instrumental nature of post-16 participation. This resistance may be interpreted through a 'post-fordist' analysis. For example, research into youth transitions (see for example Du Bois-Reymond, 1998, Ball *et al*, 2000) has indicated that in an uncertain world where qualifications cannot be assumed to translate directly into a 'good' job, young people may invest less of their identity in work and education, and more in leisure/social activities.

My data supports this interpretation to an extent. For example, later in this chapter I discuss the evidence for 'hedonistic' attitudes among the 'White' students and their mixing of 'normal' and 'choice' biographies (Du-Bois Reymond, 1998). However,

although the emphasis upon friendship and socialising may be seen in part to be a reaction to the uncertainties of the 'Risk Society' (Beck, 1992), it may also be seen as an expression of more traditional working class identities and positioning with regard to post-16 education, as I will now discuss.

In *Learning to Labour*, Willis (1978) identified a tightly bound, solidaristic culture among 'the lads' –a group of working class male secondary school pupils. The culture of these pupils supplied a set of criteria by which to judge the kind of working situation considered to be most relevant to the individual:

"It has to be work where he can be open about his desires, his sexual feelings, his liking for 'booze' and his aim to 'skive off' as much as is reasonably possible. It has to be a place where people can be trusted and will not 'creep off' to tell the boss about 'foreigners' or 'nicking stuff'—in effect where there are the fewest 'ear'oles' [] The future work situation has to have an essentially masculine ethos." (Willis, 1978: 96)

The 'White' participants of my study do not overtly exhibit the same level of antipathy towards the college as Willis' (1978) lads did towards school. It is possible however, to discern an attenuated version of the culture of the 'lads' in the female 'White' students of FG1 and the male 'White' student 'JP'. In asserting the importance of sociability and of their group friendship, these students, like Willis' (1978) lads, are establishing a discursive boundary marker between their values and the values represented by dominant discourses on education and training which tend to offer a very utilitarian, individualistic representation of education and youth. Thus, fun and sociability offer a set of criteria by which to judge future occupational positions in much the same way that the opportunity to express a traditional hegemonic masculinity did for Willis' (1978) pupils. The following comment from 'LDD' illustrates this:

"I don't want to have a job that I don't enjoy just for the money. I want a job that I'm going to enjoy. That's probably why I do lots of different things, cos if I get bored I just move on and I'm going to go for the enjoyment part of a job not the money side of things,

especially when I'm younger anyway" ('LDD': 'White British'

Female: individual interview)

Sociality therefore, appears to operate in complex inter-related ways for some of the 'White' students within this study. The issue of sociability is also central to the discourse of 'experience over qualifications' that many of the 'White' participants employed when asked about their attitudes towards HE, as I will now discuss.

Attitudes to Higher Education and the Labour Market

Orientations towards HE and the labour market revealed a marked difference between the majority 'White' students and the minority ethnic students. Of the 12 'White' participants who were asked about their post-AVCE plans in the focus groups and individual interviews, 5 indicated that they intended to go on to some form of higher education. This compares with 7 minority ethnic participants who indicated the same, from a total of 10 interviewees. This section will first discuss the comments of those 'White' students who indicated a rejection of higher education ('The Leavers') and will then discuss the comments of the minority ethnic students who indicated that they would remain within the case study college in order to pursue HE courses ('The Stayers-On').

'The Leavers'

The typical response from the 'White' participants who did not intend to continue on to HE was that they had had enough of studying. The repeated words of these participants were 'classroom' and 'writing'. The impression came across that it was not simply the content of formal studies which they found uncongenial, but also the institutional environment. The following comment is typical:

"Mine's the same as [student] I can't do any more education. I've had enough of sitting in classrooms writing" ('LM': 'White British' Female: FG1)

Three of the five participants from FG1 also emphasised the attractions of being ‘out there’ in the world of work. None had clear ideas about what they would do but all three were clear that they wanted to enter the labour market as soon as possible:

“I’m definitely going to get a job, what job that is I don’t know errm I mean I, I’d love to work abroad and I’ve.. I’m doing cabin crew so I’d love to apply for something like that. Errm, I really don’t know. The world’s my oyster” (‘LDD’: ‘White British’ Female: FG1)

The participants of FG1 and FG2 believed that ‘experience’ was of more value than qualifications *per se* in the travel and tourism industry. All the participants of FG1 and FG2 employed this form of discourse, even those who indicated an intention to go on to HE. A common thread running through many of the comments was that degree-level qualifications may even prove to be a positive disadvantage in an industry which prizes practical skills and ‘know-how’:

“The way I look at it as well is in say like the four years you spent in university you could spend that time working up and then later on errrm you may get preference over the person who has got the qualifications due to the fact that you’ve got.....four years more experience while they’ve like just sat in a classroom. [LM: cos what] It all depends what way you look at it to be honest.” (‘AR’: ‘White British’ Female: FG1)

The different orientations of the majority ‘White’ students and of the minority ethnic students towards higher education reveal different perceptions of the push and pull factors that surround their post-AVCE ‘options’. The discourse of ‘experience over qualifications’ employed by the ‘White’ participants represents both an assertion of a form of working class identity and also a resistance against hegemonic discourses relating to ‘lifelong learning’. The above comment by ‘AR’, for example, in which she argues that she will actually be at an advantage over someone who has ‘just sat in a classroom’ echoes the class-based resistance of Willis’ (1978) ‘lads’ towards qualifications and to the form of theoretical knowledge they embody:

“Practical ability always comes first and is a condition of other kinds of knowledge. Whereas in middle class culture knowledge

and qualifications are seen as a way of shifting upwards the whole mode of practical alternatives open to an individual, in working class eyes theory is riveted to particular productive practices. If it can not earn its keep there, it is to be rejected.” (Willis, 1978: 56, original emphasis)

Sayer’s (2005) distinction between the exchange-value and use-value of a material or symbolic good is pertinent here. It is apparent that at the time of the research, HE had neither exchange-value (as a positional good within the labour market) nor use-value (intrinsic value) for a majority of the ‘White’ students. In Williams’ terms, this distrust of theory and qualifications may be seen as a form of class-based ‘residual’ (1977: 123) discourse that is oppositional to dominant representations of the value of post-16 credentials.

The students’ rejection of theory and of its embodiment in HE qualifications stems not just from a sense of its perceived lack of relevance to anticipated careers. There is also a strong sense in the comments of the ‘White’ participants above that higher education—‘classrooms and writing’—is antithetical to their emerging sense of themselves as adults and what is an appropriate adulthood. This conclusion seems to resonate with findings by Archer (2003b: 181). Her sample of non-participant (in HE) working class ‘White’ males voiced a discourse that positioned higher education students as ‘immature’ and middle class. In Archer’s (2003b) research however, these classed identities also appeared to be gendered in that the female working class non-participants in her study tended to positively value higher education and rejected participation on grounds generally unconnected with identity. By contrast, the non-HE aspirants in this present study were all female except for one male. Thus, my findings would seem to suggest, *pace* Archer (2003b), that female ‘White’ working class women may also reject higher education participation as a threat to identity.

If higher education is rejected as a constraint upon an appropriate classed adult identity, the labour market is embraced as confirmatory of it. In this sense therefore, the labour market, with its promise of an adult identity, may be viewed as a form of push factor acting upon the students’ decision to reject further study. This sense of adulthood is consistent with a working class/lower middle class ‘normal biography’ (Du Bois-Reymond, 1998). A normal biography has historically been the typical mode of transition from adolescence to adulthood of working class/lower middle class

youth and is characterised by early entry to the labour market with either no prior training or a brief period of post-school training, and financial independence (Du Bois-Reymond, 1998: 66).

While the 'White' AVCE students' rejection of higher education and their keen desire to enter the world of work are characteristic of a class-based 'normal' biography, other aspects of their projected post-AVCE lives bear more resemblance to the discourse of a 'choice biography' (Du Bois Reymond, 1998). A choice biography is less linear and synchronical than a normal biography in that there is no 'clear cut' transition to an unambiguous adult status. Instead, extended periods of post-16 education and training, and the tendency to blend areas that were previously arranged in series—learning and then work—mean that the division between youth and adulthood has become increasingly blurred. For Du Bois-Reymond (1998: 64) this increasing complexity may be conceptualised as 'post-adolescence'. 'Post-adolescents' are described as:

"...male and female young people with prolonged experiences in education and training and with high demands on the standards of their future occupation and private life. Post-materialist life values, such as self-actualization and communication make nine-to-five jobs appear unattractive; work experiences might result from travel experiences and vice versa thus dissolving the clear cut division between the public and the private spheres." Du Bois-Reymond (1998: 65, original emphasis)

This description of post-adolescents resonates with some of the comments made by the 'White' AVCE students regarding their post-AVCE futures. Among these students there was a desire to 'try everything' after the AVCE. Their occupational aims were vague but they were certain that they did not want to settle in one job. Instead, they wanted a diversity of experiences:

"I don't really want a career as such because I don't want to stay in a job for the rest of my life. I want to move from job to job because like when people say, like, they've been doing like, a builder for about fifty years that just sounds boring, doing the same...I can't be doing with that, I need to move on. Cos you've

got more to talk about when you're older, haven't you? All the different careers that you've had." ('JP': 'White British' Male: individual interview)

The students were also clear that they wanted fulfilling and motivating employment. None of the 'White' students in the focus groups or individual interviews mentioned money as a desirable criterion. Instead, variety and self-actualisation appeared to be what they wanted:

"I just like to try everything. I don't want to go into a job and like most people I know hate their job. What's the point you going to work for nearly the rest of your life until you retire? I wanna do something that I enjoy. I don't want to be stuck in a job and get up in the morning and think I don't want to go into work, I want to do a job that I enjoy." ('LD': 'White British' Female: individual interview)

The students therefore seem to be voicing a post-adolescent form of discourse. Their subjective experience of the uncertainty they face after the AVCE is one of agency and control. Uncertainty is not experienced as a constraint but as something that is potentially enabling and productive. Nevertheless, the subjective experience of agency and of personal responsibility for one's future serves to "...mute and obscure the continuing class based nature of structural inequalities" (Ball *et al*, 2000:3). In fact, the desire to 'try everything' while they are still young is similar to the form of hedonism displayed by Willis' (1978) pupils. The following comments by one of Willis's interviewees are perhaps only a slightly more exaggerated version of the 'White' AVCE students' form of discourse:

"We wanna live for now, wanna live while we're young, want money to go out with, wanna go with women now, wanna have cars now, and uh think about five, ten, fifteen years time when it comes [] We are thinking about now and having a laff now..."
(Willis, 1978: 97-8)

I believe therefore, that the 'try everything' discourse may be interpreted more in terms of class continuities than in relation to a break with class habitus as may be supposed by theorists of individualisation (Beck, 1992). The 'short-termism' or

'hedonism' exhibited by the 'White' AVCE students, although subjectively experienced as personal agency, may in fact be viewed as a reaction to the constraints and risks of an insecure labour market in which they are relatively powerless. In Bourdieu's terms, we may see their subjective outlook as an internalisation of objective structural constraints.

Similarly, the students' use of a discourse of self-actualisation may also serve to obscure objective structural limitations. As some commentators (see Aggleton, 1987; Roberts and Parsell, 1994) have noted, the discourse of self-actualisation gained through a blurring of work and leisure that characterises a choice biography is a discourse that originates in the middle class. It is possible therefore, that the 'White' working class and 'new' middle class AVCE students have at least partially assimilated dominant middle class discourses in this area. Certainly, their form of discourse would seem to mark a qualitative shift from the discourses of work used by Willis' (1978) 'lads' for whom the content of all manual labour was meaningless except in its signifying of desired cultural membership. Despite this, the ability to realise a choice biography may be conditioned by more traditional class based factors. As some researchers (Du Bois-Reymond, 1998; Ball *et al*, 2000) have argued, the greater financial and cultural resources from which middle class young people are able to draw make a choice biography more available to them than their working class peers.

'The Stayers-On'

As indicated above, in contrast to the 'White' majority students, a majority of the minority ethnic participants in the focus groups intended to go on to HE. This finding was also supported by the results to question 19 of the questionnaire which asked respondents to indicate their preferred post-AVCE options. 50% (n=10) of the responses from female minority ethnic respondents indicated the HE option, thus making this group proportionately the most likely to say they would go on to HE. This was followed by 38% (n=3) of male minority ethnic respondents then 32% (n=17) of 'White' females and 18% (n=2) of 'White' males. The comments of the minority ethnic HE aspirants revealed that they saw an HE qualification as a valuable competitive edge in the labour market:

“Rather than having to work from the bottom and work my way up I hope to be like further in, if you get me. I want to do it [degree] in Hospitality Management and so that would save me from starting at the very bottom. I can come in somewhere between halfway rather than straight from the bottom” (‘MB’: ‘Black or Black British Caribbean’ Female: individual interview)

It was also notable that the minority ethnic HE aspirants tended to have much more specific occupational aims than their ‘White’ peers. All six minority ethnic individual interviewees indicated an ambition for management positions in the hospitality, tourism or retail industries and all six indicated an intention to follow an HE course in those three areas. Furthermore, the discourse of self-actualisation and the desire to ‘try everything’ employed by the ‘White’ students was absent from their comments. Instead, there was a greater tendency, although one that was variable across the six minority ethnic interviewees, to emphasise the financial motivations for work. This extract from an individual interview with ‘TM’, a female student of ‘Asian or Asian British Indian’ origin is illustrative:

Interviewer: *What would your ideal job be by the time you are 30?*

‘TM’: *A good well-paid job basically, you know, become a manager of something, for example in retail. Even if I’m just deputy manager, that’s ok as long as it’s well paid. I’m not really fussed*

As with their relatively greater orientation towards FE (discussed earlier), the attitudes of the minority ethnic students towards HE may be conceptualised in terms of the experience of push and pull factors that intersect race, class and gender. This section of the chapter, however, discusses the factors that influence the specific choice of intended HE institution by focusing on those students who indicated that they would remain at the College—the ‘stayers-on’. My concern in focusing on this group of students is to highlight the salience of cultural and material considerations for some minority ethnic HE aspirants and so to illustrate the continuing importance of class within ‘race’ upon decision-making processes.

Qualitative data gained from the ‘stayers-on’ highlighted two main motives for wishing to remain within the college: (a) familiarity with the institution; (b) its location. Two of the five ‘stayers-on’ cited familiarity with the institution as a motive.

Familiarity was explained in terms of close relations with the lecturers. The students anticipated that the support offered on the AVCE would continue into HE. The following extract from an individual interview with 'SF', a female student of 'Other Asian Background' illustrates this:

Interviewer: *So you're going to do your degree here. Have you ever thought about doing it anywhere else?*

SF: *Not really cos I've known this college for like three years now and I know the tutors, how they are like. I know Summer Row, library and all the...I know the environment, how it's like and if I move somewhere else it's gonna be like totally different, and I might not even wanna do that course again. So I'd rather go to somewhere where it's like helpful and where you know better than where you don't know. So I know this college and I've known all the tutors. So, yeah, it's best to know everyone around while you're doing the course so you can ask...you can get more help as well. That's what I think.*

The large majority of students (of all ethnic groups) in the focus group sessions and individual interviews clearly indicated that they received good academic and pastoral support. Again, the questionnaire results support this finding. In answer to question 15, 86% (n=62) of the responses agreed that they received a lot of help. The students were clear that they valued their relationship with the tutors. As discussed in Chapter Four, there is, perhaps inevitably, a degree of pragmatism and instrumentality in these relationships. In another respect however, close teacher-student relations are a way for students to extend their social ties. In this sense, the students are developing 'fluid individualized systems of social capital' (Raffo and Reeves, 2000: 162) in which they are able to develop a 'complex identity' derived from relations with both peers and teaching staff.

Moreover, the supportive ties with the teachers as 'institutional agents' (Stanton-Salazar, 1997: 10) have developed the students' stock of cultural capital that is appropriate to the institutional context. As the comment above by 'SF' seems to indicate, this includes improved problem-solving skills in negotiating access to institutionally valued cultural resources (Stanton-Salazar, 1997: 12).

Despite this, there are questions regarding the convertibility and transferability of the students' cultural capital beyond the institutional context in which it was developed. The comment above by 'SF' indicates that she feels very comfortable in the environment of the case study institution "*as a fish in water*" which "*does not feel the weight of the water and takes the world about itself for granted*" (Bourdieu, 1989: 43). Other institutions are unknown and constructed as 'risky' prospects. It is possible therefore, that the social capital the 'stayers-on' have gained at the college has had a rather ambivalent outcome: it has developed their stock of institutionally appropriate cultural capital, yet because it is a cultural capital tied so closely to the institution, it may have had an inhibitive effect upon the students' post-AVCE 'horizons for action' (Hodkinson and Sparkes, 1997). I would speculate here that the structure of the case study college (offering linear progression from FE to HE courses in the same subject areas within the same institution) and also its specialist nature (offering a narrow range of vocational courses so that the college exhibits a 'strong boundary maintenance' (Bernstein, 1971) between itself and other 'general' FE colleges) could be contributory factors to the apparently strong sense of attachment displayed by 'SF' and others.

Of course, I do not claim that the strength of social ties is the only, or even the most important, motivating factor for the 'stayers on', and two important qualifications must be attached to the analysis above. Firstly, one must also consider the *initial* (that is, prior to their joining the AVCE) volume of cultural capital of the 'stayers-on'. As previously indicated, the cultural capital of most of the students in the qualitative study samples is relatively limited. Of the five 'stayers-on', only one student 'MT' had a sibling at university. Three of the 'stayers-on' (SF, TM, BM) had working class immigrant parents educated outside of the UK (see table 5.3, p.110). Secondly, the material and spatial constraints upon choice must also be considered, as I will now discuss.

The location of the college, allowing local students to remain at home while studying, was cited by two 'stayers on'. The extract below is from an individual interview with 'MT', a male student of 'Black or Black British Caribbean' origin:

Interviewer: *Did you ever think, or, have you ever applied to other colleges or universities to do that degree?*

‘MT’: I didn’t even...like everybody was telling me, oh, you should apply to more than one, or you should do this and that but the way I see it is that college is, it’s convenient for me cos it’s near my house. Mmm, I wasn’t looking to move further away and I’m not like...like in a good position to be paying out all that money.

Other research (see for example, Reay *et al*, 2001a) has also identified a powerful discourse of ‘localism’ among working class, non-traditional HE aspirants. Reay *et al* (2001a: 861) observe that the material constraints of travel and finance frequently mean that working class students operate within very limited ‘spaces of choice’ when compared to more materially privileged students. This finding is supported by a large scale quantitative study by Callender (2003: 125) who also found that students from the lower social classes were much more likely to choose a university near their home than those of higher social classes.

Here again, race, gender and other structural variables articulate with economic class to produce particular outcomes for individuals, with the result that attitudes to debt may not simply be a result of familial financial wealth *per se*. A study by Hesketh (1999) indicates that student perceptions of their financial circumstances are a product of both their objective financial resources and also socially complex constructions of education and of borrowing to fund learning. Callender also (2003) offers evidence of this. She claims that HE students from an Asian background, and also Muslim HE students, are considerably more averse to taking out a loan to fund HE than students of other ethnic or religious backgrounds (Callender, 2003: 132).

Finally a further consideration, which was not explicitly mentioned by any of the minority ethnic participants but which may nevertheless be operating as a form of contextual constraint on choice, is that of ethnic mix. Two previous studies (Reay *et al*, 2001a; Ball *et al*, 2002a) indicate that some minority ethnic students are hesitant about entering an institution with small numbers of staff or students from their own ethnic background and so ethnic mix operates as another possible motivating factor. Given the overwhelming ‘whiteness’ of the HE sector as a whole (Reay *et al*, 2001a: 869), this represents a further constraint on choice. Furthermore, Ball *et al* (2002a: 338) found evidence that a concern with ethnic mix among minority ethnic students also connected broadly to social class in that for the ‘contingent choosers’ of their study (who were identified as working class), ethnic mix was much more important

than for the more middle class ‘embedded choosers’. I have no direct evidence of such considerations among the ‘stayers-on’ in my study but it is certainly possible that some of the students experienced these considerations as ‘structures of feeling’ which *“...do not have to await definition, classification or rationalization before they exert palpable pressures and set effective limits on experience and on action”* (Williams, 1977: 132).

Individual Life Histories

This section presents the accounts of two female second-year AVCE students who volunteered for the individual interviews. My aim is to offer a detailed ethnographic account of the push and pull factors at play within the decision-making processes of these two students. In presenting these vignettes, my aim has been both to exemplify my arguments and also to attempt to construct more holistic accounts of individual processes of social positioning and decision-making than was possible in the previous sections of this chapter. The accounts therefore allow for a degree of conceptual focus and they also illustrate the variety of individual experiences and, thus, the difficulties of interpretation and representation from such diverse data. The story of student ‘SF’, of ‘Other Asian Background’, encapsulates my arguments concerning the pressures and limitations of gender within and upon race as experienced by Asian female students for which it was believed there was some evidence within this study. The story of ‘White’ student ‘LDD’ exemplifies the arguments concerning the assumption of ‘practical’ subject positions that I have made for this group of students.

Student ‘LDD’: ‘I just want the certificate’

The story of ‘LDD’ is one of an identity that has emerged in response to the choices that she has been required to make but which she has also actively worked to create. By her own account ‘LDD’ enjoyed school and was popular with her teachers and fellow pupils. She identified herself as a ‘practical’ learner as opposed to an ‘academic’ one, which she explained by reference to her preference for discussions, role-plays and experiential learning over written activities. Her main source of satisfaction at school was also stated as being friends rather than lessons. She remembers the decision to continue her education after sixteen as being by no means inevitable or natural:

Interviewer: *Did you ever think of leaving education after your GCSEs?*

‘LDD’: *Yes, I thought about all the options. Cos I thought I’d like to have the money now to go out and do what I want. But, also I realised I wasn’t ready to from sixteen just be working straight through all my life. I wanted another little gap which this course has given me and a bit of extra education and qualifications hopefully to do better in a job.*

This account seems to illustrate the structural pressures and limitations—the ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors—that young people may experience. The pull of a relatively short-term orientation, with the promise of an income to fund leisure pursuits, was clearly competing with the push of a longer term perception that the employment available to her as a minimally qualified school leaver would have been unsatisfactory. ‘LDD’s perception of these push and pull factors is in turn related to her horizons for action formed by her habitus.

There is a strong sense in ‘LDD’s account of her parents’ reaction to her decision to go to college—*“They agreed and thought it was a good idea”*—that there was no necessary expectation that she would continue her education after sixteen. Of course, ‘LDD’s account may well not tally with that of her parents. ‘LDD’s father is a salesman while her mother is a secretary. Her father undertook apprenticeship training while her mother followed a secretarial training course. Neither parent, therefore, has personal experience of institutionally-based further education. Thus, although ‘LDD’s older brother had previously done ‘A’ levels and was studying at university at the time of interview, the path to post-16 education is not a well-trodden one and so, *“...familial resources do not provide a clear sense of ‘what might be’, and what things could be like or the links between the here and now and the possible then”* (Ball *et al*, 1999: 212).

The decision to continue her education, therefore, seems to exemplify what Evans and Heinz (1994: xiv) term ‘passive individualization’, in that goals are poorly defined and strategies to achieve them are unclear. Her comment (above) that a post-16 qualification would enable her *“...hopefully to do better in a job”* indicates that she sees education as a ‘defensive’ investment against positive downward mobility (Beck,

1992: 94). Furthermore, the fact that it offers “...another little gap” hints that it also offers a means of buying time before further educational and occupational decisions have to be made.

Another complex set of push and pull factors may be discerned in her decision to study at college rather than pursue ‘A’ levels in the sixth form. Her identification of herself at school as practical rather than academic seems to offer support for the arguments made in earlier in this chapter concerning the way in which the tripartite structure of the post-16 curriculum may ‘impose’ an educational identity upon young people. To an extent therefore, one may see ‘LDD’s choices as being pulled or limited by the ‘choices’ open to her at sixteen. However, it would be wrong to say that ‘LDD’ was passive in this process. With 7—9 GCSEs at grades A-C it is likely that she would have been accepted into the school Sixth Form to do ‘A’ levels had she chosen that route and, indeed, she indicated that her teachers had expected her to stay on at school.

Thus, the educational identity with which ‘LDD’ emerged from school was a largely positive one based upon previous success. Her identification with a ‘practical’ persona and her choice of a vocational subject over academic ‘A’ levels should not, therefore, be seen as second-choice product of a damaged educational identity. Rather, ‘LDD’s decision-making should be seen in the context of her perception of the value of certain kinds of knowledge and of related qualifications for future occupational positionings. In short, ‘LDD’ sees personality skills and practical ‘know-how’ as being more relevant to her occupational aims than formal credentials. These ‘horizons for action’ are a product of the cultural resources available to her through her habitus and they have a powerful effect on her decision-making:

Interviewer: *How do your lecturers feel you’ve done on the AVCE?*

‘LDD’: *I think they feel I could maybe do better if I focused more, was more motivated. I know that they wanted me to do the HE which I’m not going to do. I think they think I could do better but then I’ve made my choice. I know that’s not what I want to do even if the grades are there and they are good enough. I don’t want to*

do it. I've had enough of sitting in the classroom. I want to be out there in the industry.

For 'LDD' being an adult is synonymous with being 'practical'. "*Sitting in a classroom*" represents a backward step. The rejection of the academic discourse—"even if the grades are there"—thus represents a powerful pull factor for 'LDD'. However, the prospect of new experiences and meeting new people represents an equally strong push factor. 'LDD' wants to try lots of different jobs while she is still young. She says she does not want a job simply for the money, she also needs to enjoy her work. She feels that her experience of college has given her the confidence to take on the challenges of new situations:

"I feel I've changed cos I've met new people and started a brand new thing, so starting a brand new thing again would not be too much of a shock. If I'd left school at sixteen it would have been more of an initial shock just to go straight to work and I wasn't ready then, so it has made me more ready for work."

Implicit in the comment above is a recognition that after leaving college 'LDD' may well frequently find herself "*starting a brand new thing again*": instability and uncertainty being the norm not the exception. However, for 'LDD' this is to be embraced. Her desire for novelty and change and new friends seems to offer support for Beck's (1992: 97) thesis concerning the individualization of social ties and networks.

"I love being somewhere I don't know where I am and everything is new. The bars and clubs you go to are all new. I just love that."

Thus 'LDD's story represents a complex inter-play of push and pull factors. It also represents a mixture of a 'normal biography' and a 'choice biography' (Du-Bois Reymond, 1998). The rejection of further formal education, the 'early' entry into the labour market and the association of this with the gaining of 'adult' status may be seen as elements of a 'normal' biography in the terms of 'LDD's class-based habitus. However, the desire to gain many different experiences and try different jobs while young seem to hint more at a postponement of adulthood indicative of a 'choice biography'.

Student 'SF': 'You gotta stand up for your own thing'

'SF' is a Muslim student who moved to the UK from Sri Lanka when she was fifteen. Her father is a factory worker and her mother is a homemaker. Her story illustrates different sets of push and pull factors related to race, and to gender and class within and upon race.

For 'SF' there was never any question that she would not continue on to some form of education after school. Her parents, but particularly her mother, were very keen that she should achieve post-16 qualifications. However, as her parents had no personal experience of the UK education system, 'SF' seems to have been somewhat influenced in her choice of course and institution by her friends. The account she gives below illustrates the importance of an individual's social capital in decision-making. It also indicates how for 'SF', a vocational qualification was seen to be a much more realisable, less risky investment than 'A' levels:

"...my friends were recommending me to go to [case study college]. They do these courses, diplomas and stuff. You can get somewhere there. You've all these times to do them but with 'A' levels you gotta do it or you won't get a grade at all. With GNVQ or AVCE you'll get something, at least an 'E' grade. With 'A' level if you failed, you failed. That's it, you get nothing."

The choice of institution, however, seems to have primarily been influenced by location. Other colleges that 'SF' visited on open days were much further away than the case study institution. I would speculate that the material costs of travel, as well as the actual travel time, was an important factor in the decision to study at the case study college. Having nearly completed the AVCE, 'SF' now hopes to do a degree in Retail Management at the case study college. Although retail work is enjoyable to 'SF', material concerns are also clearly present in her choice of degree subject. She believes that retail work will offer the chance of stable, secure employment because customer demand will always exist:

Interviewer: *What appeals to you about retail management?*

'SF': *It's like a never-ending part retail is. Clothes trends just change, people are loving it, visualise it. They see something and*

think, 'Oh, I gotta get that'. So, you probably never end cos everyone's gotta be trendy everyday...and it's never gonna end I think, retail management. So, you go back to things, buy it and make money from that, repeat business everyday".

The desire for stable employment, and the assumption of a direct correspondence between HE credentials and occupational success is characteristic of what Brown and Scase (1994: 94) have identified as the 'traditional bureaucratic' orientation to work and careers. In their research among undergraduate students, Brown and Scase (1994: 95) found that this form of orientation was most common among students from working class backgrounds, ethnic minorities and women. In this respect, it is possible to see 'SF's desire for a degree and a stable career as a form of defence against the limitations of racism and the material constraints of class. The following comments would seem to hint at a tacit recognition by 'SF' and her mother of the structural constraints that will need to be overcome:

Interviewer: *What have your parents said about you going on to uni?*

'SF': *My mum's really forcing me to go on to uni. She's like, 'You have to go to uni'. I'm like 'Mum, I don't know yet'. She says, 'No, don't say that cos if you're holding a degree in this country no-one's gonna ask no questions. Even if you go to an employment interview and they ask, what have you done for an education, and you say you went to college and finished college and that's it, they'll probably say, oh well, you finished college, you didn't do a degree. That's gonna put you down, isn't it?'*

Thus, there is evidence in 'SF's account of how the limits of race and class are resisted and so experienced as a form of pressure towards participation in further and higher education. However, the interview with 'SF' also points towards a specific set of pressures experienced through the articulation of gender with race. The impetus towards further and higher education for 'SF' may well derive from what Ahmad (2001) terms a 'modern tradition'. In her study of female British South Asian Muslim graduates and undergraduates, Ahmad (2001) argues that far from traditional stereotypes, there is evidence that some Muslim parents place great value on a daughter's education. There are several motives for this. Firstly, Ahmad (2001: 145)

found evidence that mothers wanted their daughters to gain qualifications in order to achieve a degree of independence from future husbands and in-laws. There are hints of these pressures in 'SF's comments:

"Most of my side relatives, some of them, they don't let their girls go to uni 'cos they get married early at this stage. It's like, get married, go and settle your life, go, your husband's gonna work for you, get back. It's just like they gotta go and live their life with their husbands. So, sometimes I think it's crazy. You gotta stand up for your own thing. You can't just tell your husband everything, 'come on, do this for me, post my letter, go to the mailbox.' You can't tell them everything. You gotta know what you're doing as well. You gotta have your own reputation."

Ahmad (2001: 145) also argues that in gaining a degree a daughter may confer a level of cultural capital upon her family thus enabling the parents to "...distance themselves from the stereotype of the patriarchal and 'non-educated' family". There are hints of these pressures for 'respectability' in 'SF's comments about her mother's encouragement for her to continue her education:

"She ['SF's mother] goes, 'Education is something important where you can just learn more and you know the situations every day in life. Then you go to college [inaud] you get to know the world, how it is. If someone's talking about some topics you won't be able to interact with them, you'll be like, 'yeah I think so.' You don't know what you're gonna say. If you go to college you have the knowledge of talking, you know, having a proper relationship with a subject.'"

Yuval-Davis and Anthias (1989) offer a useful framework within which to locate Ahmad's (2001) 'modern tradition'. Yuval-Davis and Anthias (1989: 9) argue that women act as important 'boundary markers' between ethnic and national groups. What are regarded as accepted modes of behaviour for women, and the levels of freedom which they are accorded, are important symbolic signifiers of ethnic and national difference. In this sense, women may be seen as the 'cultural carriers' of their ethnic group (Yuval-Davis and Anthias, 1989:9). Thus, if we apply the argument of Yuval-Davis and Anthias (1989) to 'SF', it may be seen that gender and the 'modern

tradition' are functioning as a form of pressure towards participation in higher education.

Conclusion

The focus of this chapter has been upon the identification and analysis of differences between the student gender and ethnic sub-group samples. The most significant differences were observed between students of the 'White' majority group and those of the minority ethnic groups, particularly those of Asian origin. These differences have been theorized in terms of the experience of different pressures and limitations (or, 'push' and 'pull' factors) intersecting class, gender and race. For the minority ethnic students and their parents, the fear (or experience) of racism was identified as a limitation (pull factor) which was experienced as a pressure (push factor) towards post-16 participation. Similarly, the 'White' students' positioning of themselves in relation to FE was conceptualised in terms of a social location of relative ethnic dominance.

Class, however, was identified as an important variable within race. Thus, although the 'White' students were in a position of ethnic dominance they were also in a position of class subordination within the dominant ethnic group. It was similarly noted that the orientations of the Asian students towards post-16 participation may in part be accounted for by reference to pressures and limitations of economic class that are experienced *in addition to* those of race. Indeed, one of the important findings in this chapter is the continued importance of the cultural and material resources of class in the processes and outcomes of social positioning with regard to discourses of education and employment. This finding, therefore, stands as a caution to the assumptions of the individualization thesis of contemporary youth transitions (Beck, 1992).

Finally, this chapter has also highlighted the importance of gender within, and upon, class and race. It has been argued that the female Asian students within this study may experience push and pull factors related to education and employment that are particular to their gender. The gendered nature of the AVCE and of the jobs within the travel and tourism industry that the students may take up was also noted. It was argued that although the sociality of the female students constituted a form of cultural

capital within the field of the travel and tourism industry, the students were unlikely to be able to convert this into a form of symbolic capital through managerial authority. This was explained by reference to the gendered and classed nature of service positions within the travel and tourism industry.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

This chapter is divided into seven sections in which I will consider:

1. the value of the key theoretical concepts employed within this study in light of the findings from Chapters Four and Five;
2. the explanatory power of the theoretical model presented in Chapter Two;
3. the three variables of class, race and gender and the value of the 'intersectionalist' model used within this study for an understanding of the relationship between them;
4. the limitations of this study;
5. the implications for professional practice arising from findings;
6. the achievement of the aim and objectives of the study;
7. recommendations for further research.

Key Concepts

In this section I consider the literature that has informed this study in the light of my empirical research findings. Firstly, I consider the value of the Bourdieusian cultural framework that this study has used. Secondly, I consider the value of Beck's (1992) analysis of social change in relation to my findings concerning race, class and gender. Finally, I examine the value of the concepts of institutional habitus and learning cultures to this study.

The concept of habitus was found to be useful to this study as it enabled a connection to be made between the perspectives and actions of individual students, and their gendered, classed or racialised social positions. Habitus allowed me to situate the celebration of the practical aspects of the AVCE by the 'White' students and their apparent distrust and deprecation of theory, in the context of their social class locations. Thus, the subject positions held by the 'White' students could be seen as a set of subjective dispositions through which they aligned themselves to their objective class conditions.

The concept of a 'vocational habitus' was invoked in order to explicate the processes, (themselves informed by the students' prior social understandings connected to their race, class and gender) by which the AVCE students orientated themselves (or not) to a set of 'suitable' dispositions for service-level work in the travel and tourism industry. Habitus therefore offers a theoretical insight into the tacit, ingrained nature of dispositions and the implications of this for the social practice of individuals and groups of individuals.

The concepts of field and capital have also been of use to this study. Post-16 education and the travel and tourism industry job market have been defined as fields within this present study. Cultural and social capital in particular, have been extensively employed throughout the study. For example, I was able to theorise the relations between the lecturers and students in terms of the cultural and social capital that accrued to the students. Similarly, the relations between students themselves, and the importance placed upon peer group socialising by some of the 'White' students, were also theorised in terms of the cultural and social capital that they produced.

Taken together, Bourdieu's tools have enabled this study to view the AVCE students as individuals with 'social baggage' formed from prior experiences at home and in the education system. These experiences, and the form and levels of knowledge derived from them, have interacted with the institutional habitus encountered at the case study institution. Nevertheless, although Bourdieu has been of value, the synthetic approach, which combines understandings from Bourdieu with insights gained from RAT, (discussed in Chapter Two) can be seen to be justified. Evidence from the case study samples indicates that agents can and do think deliberatively and are capable of 'stepping outside' their habitus in ways that an exclusively Bourdieusian approach cannot accommodate.

Similarly, in the light of my findings the concept of capital also requires modification. Capital, as presented by Bourdieu, can portray social life as simple 'power-play' (Sayer, 2005:98). Sayer (2005:95) makes a distinction between goods (symbolic and material) of the social field that have 'exchange-value' and those that have 'use-value'. Use-value refers to the intrinsic value that goods have for an individual (Sayer, 2005). An example of this may be the pleasure derived from studying a subject. Exchange-value refers to the possible advantages that goods may bring to an

individual in relation to other people within the social field. An example of this would be the qualification an individual might gain through studying a subject. These two forms of value are not necessarily incommensurable but it is important to remember that in principle they are different.

Sayer (2005: 105) argues that Bourdieu's portrayal of the different forms of capital tends to emphasise exchange-value to the exclusion of use-value. This omission has some important implications. Firstly, as Sayer (2005: 114) convincingly argues, to conflate use-value with exchange-value is to overlook the fact that in an unequal society, many people are denied access to goods that they value in themselves as well as goods that may bring them positional advantage. Secondly, as Skeggs (2004b: 11) notes, the distinction is important because it allows us to see how, in a stratified society, what may be of use-value within a subordinate class may not be valued within the dominant class and, thus, will lack exchange-value. The distinction between use-value and exchange-value has been used throughout this study and it has enabled a more nuanced analysis of the findings than might otherwise have been possible.

Contrary to Beck's (1992) individualization thesis, this study has found considerable evidence for the continued importance of race, class and gender in the processes and outcomes of social positioning with regard to education and training. The material and symbolic resources of the student's family of origin have been shown to be of great importance to their educational decision-making. This finding is consonant with previous case study research into youth post-16 educational decision-making (see for example, Ball *et al*, 1999, 2000, 2002a, 2002b; Reay *et al*, 2001a).

There is evidence within this study however, to support Beck's (1992: 91) argument for a strong subjective sense of individual responsibility among contemporary youth. All the students in this study appeared to see their futures as emphatically their own responsibility and in this sense, voiced a meritocratic form of discourse with regard to education and training. Again, this echoes the findings of previous research (see for example Rudd and Evans, 1998). Nevertheless, although the students appeared to lack a *discursive* consciousness of class in the interviews, there was evidence to suggest that they have a strong *practical* sense of class.

Finally, although the focus of this study was not teaching and learning *per se*, the findings offer strong support for a view of teaching and learning as a social/cultural process rather than simply as an individualised cognitive one. For the students of the AVCE, learning is a 'process of becoming' in which they orient themselves towards a set of idealised dispositions connected to sociability and emotional labour. The reproduction of class and gender inequalities is implicit within this process. This study therefore offers support to the findings of Colley *et al*, (2003) Wahlberg and Gleeson, (2003) and Davies and Tedder, (2003). My findings indicate that for the staff on the other hand, pedagogic practice is formed from a holistic sense of professionalism which articulates with the pressures of performativity in a complex way. Above all, my findings indicate that in order to understand institutional habitus as I have operationalised the term, it is necessary to research pedagogic practice, lecturer professionalism and student dispositions together. These three aspects inhere to produce a learning culture which influences student positioning with regard to discourses relating to higher education, lifelong learning and the labour market. The findings of this study therefore offer support to Gleeson (2005: 242) who also argues that these three elements need to be considered together and not separately.

Theoretical Framework

Having gathered and analysed the data for this study, it has been found that the model presented on page 41 of Chapter Two is a fair representation of the social processes and structures/institutions pertaining to youth decision-making in education and labour markets. This study has found evidence that the students' socio-structural positions strongly influence the sense they make of the options open to them at the transitional age of sixteen. The location of the individual, at the top right-hand corner at the macro-structural level, reflects this. The two-way positioning of the arrows to and from this box indicates an individual who acts in and upon their social world but who does so within determinate social conditions.

Similarly, the two-way movement of the arrows across the diagram between structures and institutions on the right, and social processes on the left, indicates a fluid dialectic between the two and so represents a dynamic environment for educational decision-making. In particular, the location of the individual at the bottom left-hand corner of the diagram signals that individual processes of sensemaking and

positioning are continuous throughout the student's FE career. Again, this is supported by the study which has found evidence that student sensemaking is engaged in an ongoing dialogue with the institutional habitus at the meso-level, and also with wider macro-level discourses relating to lifelong learning.

A possible weakness of the diagram lies with the representation of institutional habitus. Given the complexity of this concept as I have operationalised it, it is possible that this box does not fully convey the particular role of the teaching staff. It was felt however, that to attempt to represent this visually with further boxes and connecting arrows would have over-complicated the design of the diagram and so lessened its explanatory power. Nevertheless, I feel the diagram is a reasonable abstract representation which recognises the inter-relationships between the macro, meso and micro levels of analysis and experience, and between social processes and structures/institutions.

Class, Gender and Race

The analysis of the relationships between class, race and gender within this study are premised upon my understanding of the 'intersectionality' model (Anthias, 2005) discussed below. Before arriving at this discussion however, it is first necessary to consider two other competing conceptualisations of the relationships between these variables.

The first model is the 'reductionist' model (Anthias, 2005) which sees race and gender as forms of class. This position starts from an observation of the economically disadvantaged position of (for example) large numbers of minority ethnic groups and attempts to explain this by reference to the linking of economic processes with an ideology of racism (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992). This form of analysis works upon the assumption that racism and sexism serve the needs of capitalism by providing a 'reserve army' of cheap labour.

Two problems attach to this argument. Firstly, in attempting to correlate race or gender with economic class, there is an assumption that these categories are unproblematically constituted, that is, race and gender are taken as given and not as social constructs (Anthias, 2005: 31). More fundamentally however, this form of

analysis gives primacy to the material conditions of class and fails to separate out inequalities related to economic capital *per se* with those particular to race or gender (Anthias, 2005: 31).

The second form of analysis—the ‘culturalist’ argument—is concerned not so much with the distribution and allocation of economic resources, but with processes of ‘inferiorisation’ in terms of culture and identity and with access to valued symbolic resources (Anthias, 2005: 25). Adkins (1995), whose work is discussed in Chapters Four and Five, is an example of this approach. Adkins’ (1995) thesis is particularly relevant to this discussion since it is based upon her empirical investigations into the work of women in the tourism and leisure industries and their inferiorisation through processes of sexualisation and objectification. These findings resonate to an extent with my own analyses of the workings of emotional and aesthetic labour among my student sample as discussed in Chapter Five.

To summarise a detailed argument, Adkins (1995) views the sexualisation of the female workers in her study as evidence of the fundamentally gendered nature of capital and production (1995: 158). Sexuality and gender do not meet ungendered relations of production. Instead, sexuality and gender may be actively produced through workplace practices embedded in relations of production that are themselves gendered (Adkins, 1995: 152). Thus, she rejects the argument that patriarchy articulates with capitalism to produce a gendered hierarchy of employment and access to economic resources. Instead, patriarchy and capitalism are seen as one and the same (1995: 150).

The underlying problem with Adkins’ (1995) position however, is that she makes no distinction between ‘identity-sensitive’ and ‘identity-neutral’ mechanisms of domination and subordination. For Sayer (2005: 90-91), identity-sensitive mechanisms are those which relate to the cultural attributions attached to certain population groups, for example women or minority ethnic males, and which are expressed in such practices as sexism or racism. Identity-neutral mechanisms refer to those workings of the capitalist economy which are indifferent to ascriptions of identity. Examples include global shifts in manufacturing that cause particular industries to shed jobs or changes in the value of a currency which lead to economic expansion.

In reality of course, identity-neutral mechanisms can have identity-sensitive effects due to the socially embedded nature of economic relations. As Sayer (2005: 86) argues however, the relation between the two is *contingent* rather than *necessary* and it is precisely this distinction that Adkins (1995) fails to recognise. Thus, although the sexualisation of the female workers in Adkins' (1995) study indicates the workings of identity-sensitive mechanisms of subordination, these must be viewed in the context of capitalist organisations operating within an identity-neutral framework, i.e., the maximisation of profit. This distinction therefore provides an important rationale for this present study retaining an 'abstract' concept of economic class (in this case, operationalised as parental occupation) in addition to the 'concrete' aspects of race and gender.

To argue, however, that the categories of class, race and gender are analytically separable is not to deny that they are 'lived' simultaneously within individuals (Anthias, 2005: 36). As Sayer (2005: 92) argues however, the task of abstract theory is to identify the necessary conditions of the existence of objects as opposed to their contingent associations. This is done through abstraction, that is, by focusing upon a particular variable among others within which it is embedded, for example class within race and gender. Having established through such abstraction that class has causal powers independent from those of race and gender, the task of concrete analysis is then to examine how the three variables contingently interact, possibly producing emergent effects (Sayer, 2005: 92). This is the epistemological basis of the intersectionality model which has underpinned my analysis of the data presented in Chapters Four and Five. In employing this model, I have identified independent causal powers for race, class and gender within my student sample.

Finally however, just as it is important to abstract a particular variable to examine its conditions of existence, it is also important to recombine it with the other variables from which it has been abstracted. This is because although abstraction is a useful methodological tool, on its own it cannot provide a concrete description of the contingent relations of social structures (Sayer, 1992: 98). To gain this, we must consider how class, race and gender intersect within particular and local contexts and in relation to individual and collective agency (Anthias, 2005: 37). This has been the aim of this study in the analysis and presentation of the data.

Limitations of the Research

Having completed the research process, it is important to identify and consider any limitations that may have an effect upon the findings. Two areas of limitations, related to time and to sample selection, are discussed below.

- I originally intended to conduct a longitudinal survey to track a sample of students from the first year cohort of the AVCE in Travel and Tourism (2003-04) through to the second year of the course (2004-05). I aimed to conduct tracer interviews with focus groups and individuals twice per semester in order to track the evolution of student perceptions and positioning. A longitudinal approach may also have enabled me to interview any students who left the course during the research process, thus possibly giving a wider range of views than expressed by the interview samples within this study. In the event however, the analysis of the questionnaire data took much longer than anticipated and so this plan was abandoned.
- Similarly, I had also planned to conduct some tracer interviews with ex-students who had left the second year cohort of the AVCE at the end of the 2004-05 academic year. Again, the aim was to track any evolution in the interviewees' perspectives. However, the time needed to analyse the focus group and interview data meant that this was not feasible. The findings from the research conducted with the student samples should therefore be seen as 'snapshots' with the limitations that these entail.
- The samples for the focus groups and individual interviews were opportunistic and voluntary. It is possible, therefore, that the students who volunteered may have particularly wished to express their opinions on the issues under discussion and thus may not necessarily have been representative of the whole cohort.

Implications for Professional Practice

This study has not adopted the Action Research method of educational research (Kemmis, 1988). Nevertheless, I concur with a basic tenet of the Action Research approach that argues that research is inadequate which produces only books (Lewin, 1948). Indeed, as this has been a *critical* realist study, the implications of my findings

for professional and institutional practice are of considerable importance, for social practices are formed from and by shared meanings which may be unrealised, poorly informed and inaccurate (Sayer, 2000:19). Where they exist, it is the task of the critical realist researcher to uncover such false meanings and concepts and, consequently, to be critical of social practice. Criticism, in turn, implies a necessity to engage with agents in order to change such understandings and the actions derived from these. Accordingly, Table 6.1 on the following page details the principal issues arising from my findings, alongside implications for practice. The table moves from the micro-level (the researcher) to the meso-level (staff and college management) and thus offers implications for pedagogical and managerial practice.

Two particular findings that I have identified from Table 6.1 as having implications for professional and institutional practice are the gendered positioning of the AVCE and of students by staff, and also the staff positioning of students as ‘practical’ rather than ‘academic’. In positioning the students in such ways the staff are engaging in a form of ‘cultural essentialism’, that is, they are employing, “...discourses and practices which label and relate to particular groups of people in ways which suppress difference and homogenise and fix them, not merely stereotyping but either pathologising or wrongly idealising them” (Sayer, 1997:454).

Of course, it will not be easy to challenge such practices as the staff themselves are drawing upon wider ‘supra-discourses’ (Scott, 2000:33) related to gender and class. Nevertheless, I believe it is important to work with staff on such issues so that they can play a positive role in opening up ‘spaces for transformative change’ (Evans, 2006:404). The implications for practice noted in Table 6.1 require that, at the individual level, practitioners attempt to become more reflexively aware of, and to confront, their own prejudices.

In particular, my findings indicate that practitioners need to view student identities as emerging, fluid and contingent, and not as fixed or static. Above all, practitioners need to be much more reflexive and aware of their roles and influence in helping to shape student identities and, thus, in reproducing gendered and classed inequalities. At the level of the institution and of VET systems the implications for practice require greater awareness of, and challenges to, the processes that render gender and class invisible to VET practitioners, thus helping to reproduce those very same inequalities.

This may be achieved through on-going forms of awareness training but also more generally by building awareness related to gender and class into vocational pedagogy. Teachers do have the potential to challenge educational inequalities 'from the inside' (Weiner, 1989:49). To do so, however, requires both individual commitment and an appropriate framework of support at the institutional and systems levels.

Table 6.1.: Research Findings and Implications for Professional Practice

Implications for Practice			
Issue	Researcher	Tourism Teaching Staff	College
Gendered nature of AVCE in Travel and Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify & challenge gendered assumptions in courses I teach myself. • Promote a wide range of images of relevant industries within curricular activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and challenge gendered assumptions of students. • Promote alternative images of travel and tourism industry employment within curricular activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenge gendered assumptions of staff through awareness training. • Avoid stereotyped images within promotional literature. • Review staff and student recruitment procedures for gender bias.
Valuing of job-related aspects of AVCE over academic aspects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the promotion of the academic aspect of qualifications as well as the practical, where appropriate. • Link theory with practice in curricular activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active promotion of AVCE (or successor qualification) as a general academic credential and as a route into HE. • Link theory with practice in curricular activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and, where necessary, challenge staff assumptions relating to students and Level 3 Tourism qualifications.
Cultural and Social constraints on student choice of HE institution.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demystify HE sector by inviting lecturers from relevant HE courses into the classroom. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively attempt to widen students' horizons of action through provision of advice on tourism-related HE options. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support teaching staff and Careers staff in awareness raising activities. • Awareness-raising workshops on HE routes.
Particular pressures upon female Asian students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pastoral support for students. • Close liaison work with parents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pastoral support for students. • Close liaison work with parents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural awareness training of staff. • Implement system of close liaison work with parents and, train, support and fund the work of staff in this area.

Achievement of Aim and Objectives of Study

It will be recalled that this study has been guided by one general aim and four objectives. The aim was to understand, and thereby contribute to understandings of, post-compulsory educational experiences and decision-making by young people aged 16 to 19 through a case study investigation.

The first objective sought to consider the processual aspect of student experiences through a focus upon the cultural, social and financial resources to which they have access, and the influence of these upon their decision-making. Here, the study drew largely upon the work of Bourdieu, although this was synthesised to some extent with insights gained from Goldthorpe's RAT. It was found that all the students within this study had cultural and social capital to varying degrees. Despite this, their awareness of the influence of these resources upon their experiences and decision-making is arguable since they tended to emphasise their personal agency (although a sense of free will appeared to be stronger among the 'White' student group than among the minority ethnic students, particularly those of Asian backgrounds, as discussed in Chapter Five).

The second objective related to the structural aspects of student experiences and drew largely upon a modified understanding of habitus (that is, raced and gendered as well as classed). The study found evidence for a complex interplay (operationalised as 'push' and 'pull' factors) between race, class and gender with regard to student positioning in relation to discourses of education and work. Objective three encapsulated my interest in the teaching staff and the effects of the institutional habitus. The study found evidence for gendered and classed positioning by staff of students and the AVCE qualification and subsequently for the effects of this upon student self-positioning with regard to discourses on further and higher education and lifelong learning. Evidence for this was adduced, for example, in arguments concerning the celebration of the practical aspects of the AVCE (and of the 'practical' student) over the academic aspects. Finally, the fourth objective embodied the concern of the study to enter the students' lifeworld and to honour the 'acting individual' (Danermark *et al*, 2002: 164). Thus, throughout the study, the meanings that the AVCE staff and students attached to their experiences have formed the

starting point for my analysis. Nevertheless, in adopting a Critical Realist stance, which offers the insight that social actors may have only partial or inaccurate knowledge of the social world, the study has not taken the actors' accounts at 'face value' but, instead, has sought to identify relevant 'causal mechanisms' (Sayer, 2000: 14) within the meso and macro levels of analysis.

Empirical Research Framework

Having completed the data gathering and analysis, it is considered that the empirical methods employed within this study have proved adequate for its purposes, although some limitations have been noted. It was found, firstly, that the use of the case study approach offered a number of advantages for this project:

- it allowed the research to examine the issues to a degree of depth;
- it enabled the testing of relevant theories on a research population contained within distinct boundaries; and
- it allowed a concentration of my research efforts on one particular site of the case study college—this was of great practical value to me as a single, part-time researcher with limited financial resources.

With regard to the specific tools employed within the case study, it was found that the student questionnaire produced the most challenges for the research. As my interests evolved during the course of the research process, some of the questions which had initially seemed important declined in significance. Thus, some data that was obtained was not used in the final analysis and discussion (for example, questions 2—4, 8—10). Indeed, in retrospect it appears that the questionnaire was too long in relation to the quantity of data that was used for analysis. Given the same set of research questions again, I would now produce a simplified version of the questionnaire. Nevertheless, the questionnaire data served a valuable purpose in 'sensitizing' me to relevant issues, particularly in relation to race and gender. This then helped in the preparation of the question schedules for the student and staff interviews. Additionally, I also developed valuable skills in quantitative data analysis—a method of educational research in which I had had no previous experience.

The qualitative research tools proved to be most effective in this study. The focus groups enabled me to gather a large amount of data relatively quickly and the stratified sampling of students by gender and then race served to highlight differences between these sub-samples that might not otherwise have been so readily apparent. The subsequent individual student interviews were then useful in gaining specific biographical information and to follow up on points arising from the focus groups. The individual interviews with staff members were also efficient at gathering a relatively large volume of data within a short period of time (an average of 35-40 minutes per interview).

It is believed that the combined use of quantitative and qualitative research tools was valuable to this study in two ways. Firstly, it allowed for triangulation of data with the associated advantages of increased validity of findings. Secondly, while the use of qualitative tools enabled me to capture something of the 'lifeworld' (Kvale, 1996) of the staff and students, the use of a questionnaire to capture 'objective' data on race, class and gender allowed me, (within the limitations experienced in the collection of data on social class, acknowledged in Chapter Three) to locate individuals' accounts within the context of the constraints and enablements of structure.

Recommendations for Further Research

This research could be extended in three areas. Firstly, it could be replicated and extended through an empirical study conducted at another educational institution and within other subject areas. In particular, the aims and methods of this study could be applied to a larger sample of students and staff than was possible in this study, thus allowing for a possibly broader set of perspectives than is captured here. Alternatively (or, perhaps, as a complement to the above), a future study could follow a longitudinal approach and so track the evolution of student perspectives.

Secondly, a future study could interview the parents/guardians of young people aged 16-19 in full-time education in addition to the students themselves and their teachers. This study was unable to do this and so the analysis has relied exclusively upon the accounts of the students and staff. Interviewing parents and their children would also assist a future study in opening up the 'black box of intra-household negotiations'

(Devine, 1998: 37) particularly with regard to the transfer between generations of financial assets which facilitate the take-up of post-16 educational options. This is an approach advocated by Ahier and Moore (1999) and Ahier (2000) who make a persuasive case for studying such negotiations and arrangements as a site of *on-going* influence in post-16 educational decision-making. It is also an approach that has recently been pursued by Devine (2004) who interviewed middle class parents in the UK and USA concerning their strategies to mobilise financial, cultural and social assets to aid their children's education. Devine (2004), however, only interviewed the parents and not their children. A future study which interviews parents and their children (and teachers as institutional agents) in relation to the three types of assets discussed and which, crucially, is able to connect micro-level perspectives with meso and macro-level factors, has the potential to offer the fullest picture we have to date of educational decision-making by young people aged 16-19 who live with their families.

Finally, although this study found evidence for the re-production of gender inequalities through the tacit positioning of students by the (mostly) female teaching staff of the AVCE, it did not appear to uncover equivalent evidence with regard to race. There is, however, a convincing case for what Brookfield (2003) terms the 'racialization' of post-16 E.T provision. Brookfield (2003) argues that the dominant epistemology of adult education in the U.S.A—self-directed, individualistic learning—is a 'White' euro-centric one that excludes minority ethnic traditions which “...emphasize different characteristics and understandings, such as refusing to view learning as a process separate from community processes...” (2003: 512). This is a characterisation that could equally apply to post-16 provision in the U.K. Although this study has considered student learning as a *general* socially embedded orientation towards a set of idealised dispositions, there has not been space to examine the *specific* social effects of post-16 epistemology, for example in terms of course design or assessment. A future case study could, therefore, focus upon the “*racial framing of the field's dominant epistemology*” (Brookfield, 2003: 499) to evaluate the effects of pedagogic practice on minority ethnic students at the local level.

Working It Out?

Finally, having completed the data gathering and analysis, it is now appropriate to return to the title of this thesis and to the rationale behind it presented in Chapter One. This research does indeed indicate an active and continuous ‘working out’ of post-16 experiences and decision-making by the young people in this case study. Findings also suggest, however, that they do so within determinate social conditions: there *is* an ‘It’ to be worked out.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX ONE: QUESTIONNAIRE SCHEDULE

Hello! Thanks for agreeing to fill out this questionnaire.

The aim of the questionnaire is to learn more about;

- why you have decided to study Travel and Tourism at the College.**
- what you hope to get out of your time at college.**
- your future study and career aims.**

All information you give is to help me with my personal research. Your answers are completely confidential and will not be used by any members of staff at the college.

A) About You

1. Are you: Male ☐ Female ☐
2. How old are you? 16 ☐ 17 ☐ 18 ☐ 19 ☐
3. What year of the course are you in? First year ☐ Second year ☐
4. What is your postcode? _____
5. How would you describe your ethnic background?

- | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| White British | <input type="checkbox"/> | Mixed – white and black Caribbean | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other white background | <input type="checkbox"/> | Mixed – white and black African | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Chinese | <input type="checkbox"/> | Mixed – white and Asian | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Black or Black British-Caribbean | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other mixed background | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Black or Black British – African | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other ethnic background | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other Black background | <input type="checkbox"/> | Not Known | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Asian or Asian British – Indian | <input type="checkbox"/> | Rather not say | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Asian or Asian British – Pakistani | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |
| Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |
| Other Asian background | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |

6. What is the current employment status of your parents and/or guardian (where appropriate)?

Father	Employed	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unemployed	<input type="checkbox"/>	Retired	<input type="checkbox"/>	Homemaker	<input type="checkbox"/>	Self-employed	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mother	Employed	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unemployed	<input type="checkbox"/>	Retired	<input type="checkbox"/>	Homemaker	<input type="checkbox"/>	Self-employed	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>
Guardian	Employed	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unemployed	<input type="checkbox"/>	Retired	<input type="checkbox"/>	Homemaker	<input type="checkbox"/>	Self-employed	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. If you answered 'employed', please say what their job is. Try to be as specific as possible. For example, don't just say 'works in a bank', instead write 'Bank Manager' or 'Bank Cashier' etc:

8. Do you have any brothers and/or sisters? Yes ☐ No ☐ (If you answered 'No' please go to Question 11)

9. How many of your brother(s) and/or sister(s) do you have in the following categories? Please write the number in the space provided.

- | | |
|--|-------|
| a. School pupil | _____ |
| b. Full-time student in further education | _____ |
| c. Part-time student in further education without job. | _____ |
| d. Part-time student in further education with job. | _____ |
| e. Full-time student in higher education | _____ |
| f. Part-time student in higher education without job. | _____ |
| g. Part-time student in higher education with job. | _____ |
| h. Full-time employed | _____ |
| h. Part-time employed | _____ |
| j. Unemployed | _____ |
| k. None of the above | _____ |

10. Do you receive an EMA? Yes ☐ No ☐ Rather not say ☐

B) Before you came to college

11. How many GCSEs A-C did you get?

None

☐

1-3

☐

4-6

☐

7-9

☐

10-12

☐

12. How far do you agree/disagree with the following statements?

- | | | | | | | | | | |
|----|--|----------------|--------------------------|-------|--------------------------|----------|--------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| a) | I learned a lot at school. | Agree strongly | <input type="checkbox"/> | Agree | <input type="checkbox"/> | Disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> | Disagree strongly | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b) | What I did at school has helped me with my current course. | Agree strongly | <input type="checkbox"/> | Agree | <input type="checkbox"/> | Disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> | Disagree strongly | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c) | What I did at school will help me with my future career. | Agree strongly | <input type="checkbox"/> | Agree | <input type="checkbox"/> | Disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> | Disagree strongly | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d) | Schoolwork was boring. | Agree strongly | <input type="checkbox"/> | Agree | <input type="checkbox"/> | Disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> | Disagree strongly | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e) | I enjoyed school. | Agree strongly | <input type="checkbox"/> | Agree | <input type="checkbox"/> | Disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> | Disagree strongly | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| f) | I worked hard at school. | Agree strongly | <input type="checkbox"/> | Agree | <input type="checkbox"/> | Disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> | Disagree strongly | <input type="checkbox"/> |

C) About why you came to college

13. Please number the following statements in order of importance to you. (1 = most important). If something is not important, please leave the box blank.

“I wanted to do a course in travel and tourism because...”

- | | | |
|----|--|--------------------------|
| a) | I got interested in travel and tourism because of work experience I did at school. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b) | I am quite sociable and would like to work with people in the travel and tourism industry. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c) | I would like the opportunity to travel. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d) | I'm not really interested in travel and tourism; it's just a qualification to get a job. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e) | It's an easy subject. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| f) | I didn't want to do 'A' levels | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| g) | other (please describe) _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> |

14. Please number the following statements in order of importance to you. (1 = most important). If something is not important, please leave the box blank.

"I decided to come to the [Case Study College] because..."

- a) The college has a good reputation. ☐
- b) This is the easiest college for me to get to from where I live. ☐
- c) I had friends who were already here. ☐
- d) my parent(s) wanted me to come here. ☐
- e) my careers advisor/teacher recommended it ☐
- f) I've got a brother/sister here. ☐
- g) other (please describe) _____ ☐

D) About the [Case Study College]

15. How far do you agree/disagree with the following statements?

- | | | | | | | | | | |
|----|--|----------------|--------------------------|-------|--------------------------|----------|--------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| a) | College classes teach me a lot. | Agree strongly | <input type="checkbox"/> | Agree | <input type="checkbox"/> | Disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> | Disagree strongly | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b) | My main group of friends is at this college. | Agree strongly | <input type="checkbox"/> | Agree | <input type="checkbox"/> | Disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> | Disagree strongly | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c) | I get a lot of help from the lecturers. | Agree strongly | <input type="checkbox"/> | Agree | <input type="checkbox"/> | Disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> | Disagree strongly | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d) | The college has a good atmosphere. | Agree strongly | <input type="checkbox"/> | Agree | <input type="checkbox"/> | Disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> | Disagree strongly | <input type="checkbox"/> |

E) About the course you are doing now

16. Please number the following statements in order of importance to you. (1 = most important). If something is not important, please leave the box blank.

"I am doing this course because..."

- a) I think it will be valuable for jobs in the travel and tourism industry. ☐
- b) I think it will be valuable for jobs in any industry. ☐
- c) I couldn't think of another course to do. ☐
- d) it will help me to apply for a BA or HND in travel and tourism at this college. ☐
- e) it will help me to apply for a BA or HND in travel and tourism at another college. ☐
- f) it will help me to apply for a BA or HND in any subject. at this college. ☐
- g) it will help me to apply for a BA or HND in any subject at another college. ☐
- h) other (please describe) _____ ☐

F) About the future

17. What sort of job do you expect to be doing when you are 30? Please try to be as specific as you can.

**18. Which of the following qualifications do you think would be most valuable for the kind of career you want?
Please number in order of importance (1= most important).**

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| a) AVCE in travel and tourism | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b) Foundation Degree | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c) HND | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d) BA | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e) Masters Degree/Postgraduate Diploma | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| f) None of the above | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| g) Other (please explain) | <input type="checkbox"/> |

19. When you finish the college course you are doing now, will you...?

- a) apply for an HE course, (eg BA degree, HND, Foundation Degree) and if you can't get one, look for a job. ☐
- b) look for a job ☐
- c) look for a job and if you can't find one look for an HE course. ☐
- d) take a gap year. ☐
- e) don't know. ☐

20. If you think you are **not** going to do a Higher Education course, is it because...

- a) you are worried about getting into debt. ☐
- b) it's not necessary for the kind of job you want. ☐
- c) it's not something you've thought about. ☐
- d) you don't want to do any more studying after this course. ☐
- e) it's more important for you to get a job. ☐
- f) none of the above (please explain if possible) ☐

g) not applicable ☐

G) About your Higher Education Course (if this does not apply to you please turn to section H on the next page).

21. If you are going to apply for an HE course, is it?

- a. a BA. ☐
- b. an HND. ☐
- c. an HND leading to a BA. ☐
- d. a foundation degree. ☐
- e. other ☐

22. If you are going to apply for an HE course, is it?

- a. in travel and tourism ☐
- b. in another subject ☐

23. Do you think you will study your HE course at?

- a. this college ☐
- b. another college/university ☐

H) About Future Jobs

24. How far do you agree/disagree with the following statements?

a)	I will probably have less than five full time jobs before I retire.	Agree strongly <input type="checkbox"/>	Agree <input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree <input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree strongly <input type="checkbox"/>
b)	It will be important for me to get on the job training throughout my career.	Agree strongly <input type="checkbox"/>	Agree <input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree <input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree strongly <input type="checkbox"/>
c)	It is a good thing to work for many different companies to give you more experience and skills.	Agree strongly <input type="checkbox"/>	Agree <input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree <input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree strongly <input type="checkbox"/>
d)	I expect to own my own business.	Agree strongly <input type="checkbox"/>	Agree <input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree <input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree strongly <input type="checkbox"/>
e)	I expect to be a manager.	Agree strongly <input type="checkbox"/>	Agree <input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree <input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree strongly <input type="checkbox"/>
f)	I just want to earn enough money to get by.	Agree strongly <input type="checkbox"/>	Agree <input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Disagree</i> <input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree strongly <input type="checkbox"/>

g)	I don't care what sort of job I get when I leave college.	Agree strongly <input type="checkbox"/>	Agree <input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree <input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree strongly <input type="checkbox"/>
h)	I will find it easy to get the sort of job I want in the West Midlands when I leave college.	Agree strongly <input type="checkbox"/>	Agree <input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree <input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree strongly <input type="checkbox"/>
i)	I want a job that offers good training opportunities.	Agree strongly <input type="checkbox"/>	Agree <input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree <input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree strongly <input type="checkbox"/>
j)	I want a job that offers good opportunities for promotion.	Agree strongly <input type="checkbox"/>	Agree <input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree <input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree strongly <input type="checkbox"/>

I About the Travel and Tourism Industry

25. How far do you agree/disagree with the following statements?

a)	The Travel and Tourism Industry does not offer secure jobs.	Agree strongly <input type="checkbox"/>	Agree <input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree <input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree strongly <input type="checkbox"/>
b)	The Travel and Tourism Industry offers well paid jobs.	Agree strongly <input type="checkbox"/>	Agree <input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree <input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree strongly <input type="checkbox"/>
c)	The Travel and Tourism Industry offers good chances for promotion.	Agree strongly <input type="checkbox"/>	Agree <input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree <input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree strongly <input type="checkbox"/>
d)	The Travel and Tourism Industry needs highly skilled workers.	Agree strongly <input type="checkbox"/>	Agree <input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree <input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree strongly <input type="checkbox"/>
e)	The Travel and Tourism Industry is mainly made up of large businesses.	Agree strongly <input type="checkbox"/>	Agree <input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree <input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree strongly <input type="checkbox"/>

Is there anything you would like to add about school/college/ your course/your future plans/travel and tourism that has not been covered in any of the questions above?

Thank you for your time.

Schedule

School experiences

- School work
- Teachers
- Friends
- GCSE results

Decision to do post-16

- Parents
- Friends
- Teachers
- Careers advisors

Decision to do a vocational course

- Parents
- Friends
- Careers advisors

Decision to do Travel and Tourism

- Travel etc
- Careers advisor / teachers
- Friends / relatives

Decision to go to Study Institution

- Reputation
- Peers / friends
- Parents
- Location
- Teachers / careers advisors

Experiences of Study Institution

- Course work
- Teachers
- Friends

Plans after the AVCE (HE, Job, Other Option)

- Intending / Not intending / Don't know

Job you would like to be doing at 30 / Job you expect to be doing at 30

- Money
- Job satisfaction

Qualifications and the labour market

- Value as minimum requirement

- Portfolio careers
- Entrepreneurship
- Re-training and lifelong learning

The Travel and Tourism Industry

- Need for qualifications
- Promotion prospects
- Security of employment
- Pay

APPENDIX THREE: TRANSCRIPT OF FOCUS GROUP ONE

- 1 **AM** Ok, right well hello everybody, first question to you is...I wonder if you
2 could tell me a little about your experiences of school before you came
3 to this college, what was it like?
- 4 **LDD** I was errrm I enjoyed school but I didn't like the whole like education
5 part of it ok , no I did, but like I was more like practical I didn't like like
6 loads of writing and exams and everything, I think that's why I chose to
7 do this course. Cos it's more practical and there's a lot of chatting and.
- 8 **LH** I really enjoyed school, I think they really really pushed me to my limit
9 to make sure that I got the best GCSEs ever and I think that was the
10 best
- 11 **LD** I didn't like school because of things that happened at school like I
12 don't know, I just didn't like school because of things that happened at
13 school personal things that happened at school but other than that I
14 used to enjoy the work side of it cos I like to learn new things basically
- 15 **LM** I enjoyed school but I only mainly went to see my mates I didn't like the
16 education side of it I didn't like the way they taught me. They taught me
17 like writing and listening I teach by as LDD said the practical things so
18 that's why I came to do this really.
- 19 **AM** Yeah, what, sorry, I'll come to you in a second, what would you mean
20 by practical things?
- 21 **LM** More like constructing things like
22 **LDD** cookery and drawing and food
23 **LDD** Yeah the actual craft.... and drama
24 **LD** Oh, I loved drama
25 **LH** It's like you don't want to be sat there with a piece of paper
26 [LDD: That's like...] You would rather be doing role plays or something
27 like that
- 28 **LDD** Cos that's what we want to do cos we want to be hands on with
29 customers we don't want to be stuck in an office writing down like that
30 shows what we want to be really
- 31 **LH** Definitely
- 32 **AM** How about you AR?
- 33 **AR** I didn't like school but I did appreciate the way my school pushed us.
34 They kind of prided themselves on getting the best marks and because
35 of the school it was they pushed everyone as far as they could and I
36 appreciate that now more than I did then
- 37 **AM** Right
- 38 **LH** I did as well
- 39 **AR** But like here it's like completely different they just leave you to your
40 own things but at my school it was more like you couldn't do that you
41 had to get the marks.
- 42 **LH** Exactly
- 43 **LD** My school would not push you at all [LM: mine didn't push you]
- 44 **LH** It's like we're the best you're going to get the best, we're going to make
45 you work until you get the best. [LD: No, no]
- 46 **LM** My school just made sure everyone just passed at minimum grade
- 47 **LD** Our school didn't even care even if you passed it at minimum grade, I
48 mean if I didn't understand something in Maths cos that's why I lost
49 interest he just told me if I don't understand once I'm not repeating it

50 again so obviously that isn't going to want to make me want to learn so
51 by year 9/10 I just couldn't be bothered with it any more.

52 **AM** So you feel they didn't push you enough?

53 **LD** They didn't push me at all so they told me I didn't understand it
54 basically tough luck but I come out good from it

55 **LDD** I was pushed our school pushed us but not like too far I mean I got
56 what what I knew I was capable of and that was it so

57 **AM** OK, what about, sort of friends at school. Is that where most of your
58 friends were?

59 **LH** Oh, I miss my, I miss my friends

60 **LDD** I had such a good time there was like a group of like 8 of us we was
61 always together and that is what made my school life what it was [LH:
62 Yeah] cos I used to go to school for them and like in every class we
63 was all the same ability so we was like in the same group. It was great,
64 loved it.

65 **LH** Yeah, exactly like mine, I just absolutely loved it.

66 **LD** I hated it...I hated it. [Laughter] I hated all the people there I hated it it
67 was horrible. It was all...I don't know whether I'm allowed to say it but
68 they were all bitches basically, a lot of bitchiness in school.

69 **LM** I love my friends [Laughter] they were what made my school days
70 [LDD: Yeah, that's what I'll always remember it for]
71 That's why I went I went to socialise I went to have fun with my friends.
72 There was about 20 30 of us

73 **LH** There were about twenty of us in a group as well

74 **LM** And it was just the whole year got on it wasn't like just in our classes it
75 was the whole year

76 **AM** Yeah

77 **LM** So it was I love d it

78 **LD** Mine was the opposite to that completely

79 **AR** Yeah mine was the opposite to that. I'd have enjoyed school a lot more
80 if I was with different people,

81 **LD** Yeah, that was like me but my friends weren't friends. They were the
82 ones that was back stabbing really... that's that

83 **AM** Thanks, [Laughter] excellent

84 Can I ask when did you decide that you were going to carry on
85 studying after you'd finished your GCSEs?

86 **LH** It's always something I've wanted to do,

87 **LD** Forever since I was little I've wanted to go to college and uni, definitely

88 **LDD** No it wasn't always a decision for me I was, I would have thought that I
89 would have got a job straight away but when it come to it I was thinking
90 what actually am I going to go into? And I'd always wanted to do
91 travelling and that so I thought I'll do 2 years and then I can get my job
92 then, that's what I always thought

93 **LM** Mine was just a case of I thought I was going to go and work but then
94 when it came to it I thought I don't want to be working yet, I want
95 another two years of doing nothing really socialising with my mates and
96 that's what it was [LDD: That is true]

97 **LM** I didn't want to go into working straight away, so that's

98 **LH** No, I didn't want to go into work

99 **LDD** You've got the rest of your life to work

100 **AR** I wanted to go to work I just didn't know what I wanted to do and I'd
101 done leisure so I thought, and I enjoyed that so I thought I might as well
102 just carry on that side of it

103 **AM** That was how you got into this yeah ok
104 OK and that's kind of answered my next question about the decision to
105 do travel and tourism, was that.

106 **LDD** Yeah, I've just always wanted to travel and live abroad and it just I just
107 thought I want to do something that I'm going to be interested in
108 enough to get a good mark at what I'm doing which maybe [Laughter]
109 [inaud] but yeah that's what made me do it cos I love holidays (yeah) I
110 just want to live a holiday life

111 **LH** I've always been interested in the industry I go away every year, I see
112 what people do and so I just keep thinking why don't I try it one time.
113 So that's what got me into the course really.

114 **LD** I really wanna do it cos I like to learn about different cultures and things
115 like that I enjoy the culture side of holidays I don't like going to built up
116 places, you know what I mean I prefer more cultured places and I
117 wanna move abroad and have my own business abroad I don't want to
118 stay over here so what I'm going into will be the best for me

119 **LM** Mine was just a case of I didn't want to stay on at school and do A
120 levels [Laughter] so it was like a choice between this or one of the other
121 courses I didn't want to do hair, I don't want to do childcare and I was
122 interested in geography and travel so that was like why I chose this
123 really

124 **AM** Yeah

125 **AR** It's like I said earlier I'd done the leisure and I've always travelled a lot
126 so it just seemed like I really enjoy my travelling so I thought it was like
127 a logical

128 **LD** I love travelling [Yeah]

129 **LDD** I just love travelling, that is what it's all about.

130 **LD** See the world

131 **LDD** Yeah, just seeing new places

132 **AM** So you think this will ...

133 **LD** Definitely, definitely.

134 **LDD** It has [inaud] a lot

135 **LD** Because we, because the qualifications we'll get we get like the set
136 qualification but we also get like additional ones [Additional ones] so if
137 we go into a job interview we're going to get picked over the people
138 who haven't got them qualifications sort of give us a head start even if
139 we left now and didn't go on and like Uni [Yeah] like some of them are
140 going to do

141 **LD** Yeah, cos like as well as our AVCE programme they've done additional
142 courses like Galileo, Cabin Crew, Repping and Travel Agents' course.
143 They've done everything, cruising

144 **LD** They have been really good to us to be fair

145 **All** General Agreement

146 **AR** They haven't just gave us a set qualification

147 **LD** LD: Yeah, and we haven't had to pay for it

148 **LM** Most people who come in have had to pay to do it

149 **LD** Cos like ABTAC it's £200 to do it and we get it for free. How many
150 times have like people re-sat the exam? [Yeah, laughter, exactly]
151 **AM** So that is very good then, you're getting other qualifications not just the
152 AVCE
153 **All** Yeah good good
154 Yeah it's really, really good
155 **AM** Ok, excellent and what made you chose this college particularly?
156 **LDD** Oh, well I went to see three colleges [Laughter] and this was just
157 outstanding
158 **?** Yeah yeah
159 **LDD** much better, to me, I loved the way it wasn't like school it didn't remind
160 me of anything like school it was more, like a work place and it was just
161 brand new and all the facilities just excellent, that is just what drove me
162 here, it's great because I mean I live a long way away as well and I
163 travel here so it was just, it was just...
164 **AM** So there are closer colleges you could have gone to?
165 **?** [yeah, yeah] Yeah there are closer colleges but the facilities here and
166 to do our course it's the best college
167 **LD** It's the best college, this is the best college to do travel and tourism
168 [Yeah, yeah] because that's what it specialises in so
169 **AM** OK
170 **LD** And it is completely different to all the other different colleges I went to
171 see [LH: Oh God] To be fair they were dives [LH: yeah] they were
172 absolutely disgusting [LH: terrible] like [local college]?
173 **LH** [Local college], ugh!
174 **LD** [Local college], [local college] was horrible of all the other colleges but
175 as soon as I seen this I knew it was where I wanted to come because it
176 didn't like as LDD said it didn't remind me of school one bit I didn't want
177 to be reminded of school [No] I love it here to be fair
178 **LH** It's different, it just seems different
179 **LM** My reason was one because it was like the best college for the course
180 but the other one was because it's in the centre of town it's not like
181 there's nothing to do so in your lunches there's always something you
182 can do there's always something going on and there's like one of my
183 mates came here before and she was telling me about the social life
184 side of it so
185 **?** Oh God yeah
186 **LM** And [inaud] how many holidays you go you on, you get taken on loads
187 of trips and that was another part of it
188 **AM** Right
189 **LH** It's just in an ideal location
190 **AM** Close to the City Centre, The Bull ring
191 **LM** Yeah, It's easy to get to
192 **AM** Did, when you were at school, did any of your teachers know about this
193 place or careers advisors?
194 **LM** No they didn't want us to go there everyone wanted us to stay on [LH:
195 Yeah, stay on] in the sixth form because they got paid every student
196 **LD** Well, my school didn't have a sixth form so they didn't really care where
197 you went [inaud]. My school didn't care full stop. [inaud]

198 **LM** So they wanted us to stay on so they weren't trying to push you out to a
199 different college they were trying to get everyone to stay there cos they
200 got paid for it

201 **AM** Yeah, get as much money as possible?

202 **LDD** No, my school was like cos I live further away I don't think [Case Study
203 College] was an option for many people so they didn't say, it was my
204 choice, my decision so it was nothing to do with the school

205 **LD** No

206 **LH** I heard about it through someone else I did

207 **LD** I heard about it through someone and on the radio it's always on
208 Galaxy

209 **LDD** I just always wanted to come to [Case Study College] for some reason

210 **LH** I did ever since year 9 it's really strange. [inaud] yeah, since year 9

211 **AR** It's just cos some of my friends were over the road and it was someone
212 to come with in the morning and go home with like

213 **AM** You had a friend who was coming here?

214 **AR** Well they went to the other building, so like it was just someone that I
215 knew so I wouldn't be going into like although I was on my own in one
216 aspect

217 **AM** Yeah

218 **AR** There was still someone if I like had problems, I still had someone
219 [Yeah] there that I could go back to

220 **LM** Mine was also like because nobody from school had come here

221 **LD** That's another reason why I [inaud] I wanted a fresh break.

222 **LM** Even though I really got on with my mates at school, it was like, I just
223 wanted somewhere totally different from them because to make [LDD:
224 a new] a new set of friends to make totally meet totally different people

225 **LD** I never had that opportunity [inaud] of my friends were here

226 **LM** Because otherwise none of them wanted to do this course but I was
227 like there was, I could have either followed them and done something I
228 didn't enjoy or gone on my own like these mates and then do what I
229 wanted to do.

230 **LDD** Yeah I'm glad that I've done this

231 **LD** I wanted a clean break from everything at school I hated.

232 **LH** Everyone went to [local college]

233 **LDD** I didn't know anyone when I started here and now I know everyone and
234 that just feels great after 2 years down the line to think

235 **LM** I met someone now I'm closer now the first day I started so I was quite
236 lucky in that way. [LD: and me]

237 **AM** OK, and now that you're here would you say you've made a whole new
238 bunch of mates?

239 **All** Yeah

240 **LD** Ah, I love everyone here, [LDD: yeah, definitely] everyone in our year
241 we get on with everyone in every class, [yeah] everyone is fantastic
242 and from when we went to France last year on a school [inaud] I can't
243 believe how close everyone really is now it's just amazing [LM:
244 especially since Benidorm]

245 **?** Yeah, Benidorm

246 **LM** Yeah, Benidorm

247 **AM** So you have sort of grown together over there?

248 **LH** It's because you're there to support each other. You're there to help
249 each other especially when you're away

250 **All** Yeah yeah

251 **LDD** You definitely become a lot closer and it just feels great to be able to
252 like you know if you come in one day and your close friends weren't
253 here there would always be someone , there's always someone there

254 **LD** Yeah Yeah

255 **LD** If all these weren't here [LH: Yeah, because I got moved into this
256 group, didn't I?] there'd be a million and one people you could be with
257 in the class and no-one would like

258 **LM** Because I got moved into this group from another group and at first I
259 was wary about it cos I didn't know anyone but...

260 **AM** Yeah, but you've settled in fine?

261 **LDD** Because we're all the same type of people were all like extroverts,
262 were all like mad and... (laughter)

263 **LD** Opinions, everyone's got opinions, everyone likes it to be heard which
264 can cause conflict
265 [laughter]

266 **AM** OK, excellent and errm, let's have a look...well, we've talked you said
267 ...you're enjoying your time here, is that right?

268 **All** Yes

269 **LM** Fabulous, I love it, I love coming to college.

270 **LDD** Yeah, we just...I love it I've got to say I really do

271 **LD** That's why I'm staying on

272 **LM** I'd rather come to college than stay at home than just not turn up

273 **LDD** It is a lot of socialising you know at college because we've got the
274 hours we do and it's a lot of like free time and a lot of having fun

275 **AM** OK and do you feel you get a lot of support from the teachers?

276 **?** Sometimes, some lecturers

277 **AR** They don't push you as much as you...as I'd like them to but at the end
278 of the day they are there for you.

279 **LM** No, but at the end of the day, this college is more like you push yourself
280 you're not backed up by a teacher

281 **LD** They are lovely, they're more like friends though [yeah, yeah] [LDD:
282 Which is nice] I don't really see them as lecturers, maybe you shouldn't
283 but I see them more as a friend than a lecturer

284 **LDD** But at the same time they teach us what we need to know.

285 **LD** But I feel like me and AR was talking about the other day that because
286 we done so well last year like this year
287 they're just leaving us like saying well obviously if you done it last year
288 then you can do it this year but it might not necessarily be the same.

289 **AR** I went to see one of the lecturers the other day about my grades and
290 and it was... I was saying is there any way I can get my grades higher
291 and it was like aren't you happy with what you've got? You've got an
292 average mark.

293 **LD** And that's what the conversation [inaud]

294 **AR** And surely you should be the one pushing me saying no you can get
295 the next mark up if you want it but they just didn't seem bothered

296 **LD** [lecturer] is worse for that she says why aren't you happy? And I said
297 cos I can push myself further

298 **LM** Mine's the case of last year you had more...the deadlines were more
 299 strict yet your work had to be on this date or you didn't pass. This year
 300 it's like hand it in whenever you can (yeah, yeah), so that's what's
 301 making me like

302 **LDD** And we want to hear that at the time but really we do need to be told
 303 **LD** Really, I do need to be told, kicked up the arse basically. I need to be
 304 pushed cos otherwise I'm just gonna

305 **LM** Like I am
 306 **LD** Yeah, I'm just gonna do what I'm doing, that's not a lot
 307 **AM** Would you all say that you need to be pushed?
 308 **All** Yeah, yeah

309 **LDD** But other I think they are very friendly...[LD: they are fantastic] you can
 310 go and if you've got any problems they will help you and they'll give it
 311 their all really, so

312 **LD** I would say especially [lecturer] she would always be there for you
 313 **LH** Yes, I would always say they are more like my friends
 314 **LD** Yeah, they are more my friends than my lecturers. I can't see them as
 315 my lecturers.

316 **LH** Yeah, they're just great
 317 **LD** I think it'd be really weird if they shouted at me or something like that. I
 318 don't see them like they're higher than me if you know what I mean.
 319 **LH** Yeah, it's just like popping into the staffroom [Hi, Hi] [LD: Sit down].
 320 Just leave my stuff here, have a little chat. They know everything don't
 321 they?

322 **LD** Oh! They're nosey, they are nosey trust me! [Laughter]
 323 **AM** OK right. Right. Can I ask you what you're planning to do if you know
 324 anyway after you finish this course?

325 **LH** We're alright. [Laughter] We know what we're doing.
 326 **LDD** Errrm, God. I'm a bit worried because I haven't got a definite thing. I
 327 know now that university is not for me, because, like I feel that the
 328 educational side of it I've come to the end for me cos like sitting here
 329 and doing assignments and exams. That's why I don't want to do
 330 university but I'm definitely going to get a job, what job that is I don't
 331 know errm I mean I, I'd love to work abroad and I've.. I'm doing cabin
 332 crew so I'd love to apply for something like that. Errm, I really don't
 333 know. The world's my oyster

334 **AM** Ok, But university's ruled out is it for the time being?
 335 **LDD** Yeah, yeah it is, yeah.

336 **LH** And I'm going to go into higher education over in the other building...
 337 **AM** Alright, OK
 338 **LH** ...and carrying on doing it. Well, I did pick Hospitality and Tourism
 339 Management as my first choice but I've changed it to Marketing and
 340 Tourism Management

341 **AR** You don't want to do Hospitality, you'd have to work in the café.
 342 **LH** Yeah, I know.
 343 **LD** I'm staying on, I'm staying on to go over there and I'm doing a Tourism
 344 and Business Management because I want to run my own business
 345 abroad and things and I think that's the best for me.

346 **AM** OK, would that be like a degree or a foundation degree?
 347 **LD** Yeah, it's a degree

348 **LH** Mine's a BA
349 **LD** I don't want to do the foundation degree. I think they might start you off
350 on that over there when I was speaking to [lecturer] then after the year
351 they see how you're doing then you'll be put on but if I can't do the
352 foundation degree then to be honest [LH: Yeah] I don't want to do a
353 degree, if I can only do the foundation because I want more for me than
354 that [LH: Yeah that's what I want].
355 **AM** You want the ordinary degree, not the foundation?
356 **LD** Yeah, I want more than that for me definitely.
357 **AM** Sure, why would that be ?
358 **LD** Because I can do it and therefore I shall push myself to do it [LH:
359 Mmm, yeah] There's no point going lower if I can do it and I know I can,
360 so...
361 **LM** Mine's the same as LDD's. I can't do any more education. I've had
362 enough of sitting in classrooms writing. I just, I want to do a bit of
363 everything. I mean I don't know what I'm going to do when I leave
364 college straight away but next March I want to apply to go repping for
365 the seasons and then when I come back see what's going on after that
366 and then probably work in a Travel Agents and then work in the airport
367 and then I want to move away and, like, work abroad full-time [AM:
368 Right]. I just want a bit of everything while I'm young [AM: Yeah, yeah]
369 before...otherwise I'll look back and think, I should have done that, I
370 should have done that.
371 **AM** OK, would you, either of you think of HE later on?
372 **LM** I might do, it depends.
373 **LDD** Depending on what, I mean, if I get out there into the industry and I'm
374 enjoying it and I'm having a great time there'd be no reason for me to
375 start back, I mean that would be even harder then to come back to
376 working, but if I come to a point where I thought I've got no direction, I
377 want to start something totally different that's when maybe I'd do it [LM:
378 Yeah same here] that's when...
379 **LM** That's what mine is. I'd consider it if it was the right time and the right
380 place
381 **LDD** Yeah, if I was in the right frame of mind to be quite honest because I
382 don't think that I could push myself
383 **LM** But I've gone from like all my life at school, I just need a break to
384 determine whether I want to do any more education or not
385 **LDD** Yeah
386 **AM** OK
387 **AR** I'm the same as these two really. I've had enough of me being sat in
388 the classroom and I think it's very unlikely that in the future I will come
389 back to education. I just want to be out there now doing it errm...not
390 necessarily the money side of it but I think it's just gonna.. I'm just
391 bored of the whole environment. Like LM said, I've been doing it since I
392 was like five, like the last thirteen years, I just want a change.
393 **AM** Yeah, sure. And errm, right, perhaps a slightly different question,
394 imagine we live in an ideal world, and you can have any job you want,
395 what job would you ideally like to be doing by the time you're thirty ?
396 **LDD** Oh, I know...
397 **AM** I know it's some way off yet

398 **LDD** I know, by the time I'm thirty I would absolutely love to own my own bar
399 and restaurant errm and just be living it up in a different country, that's
400 what I'd absolutely love to be doing, no doubt about it.

401 **AM** Yeah

402 **LDD** If I can be that's what I want to do

403 **AM** Is that something you've always wanted?

404 Yeah, I just would love that atmosphere, that holiday atmosphere and
405 being in...I'd want to own a bar and restaurant and be like the top
406 person that's what I really want to do

407 **LD** Is this about our life or career, what we want to be doing in thirty years?

408 **AM** Your career, job yeah, by the time you are thirty.

409 **LH** I ain't got a career in thirty years' time! I just want to, I just want to live
410 abroad, I don't know what I want to do but I know I want to live abroad
411 [LDD: Definitely]

412 **LD** I want to be abroad and I want to be owning my own business whether
413 it be a bar or a restaurant or a hotel and I want my own business, I
414 just...independent woman living abroad.

415 **LM** Mine's the extreme, I want to own my hotel chain if I lived in my own
416 ideal world.

417 **LD** Ideal world, yeah you'd wanna chain

418 **LM** In my ideal world I'd want a chain of bars, restaurants and hotels. [LD:
419 Definitely] [LDD: Oh God, yes]

420 **LM** Realistically it's not going to happen

421 **LD** Maybe even my own fleet of aircraft as well. [Laughter]

422 **LM** I'll probably just end up as a cleaner somewhere [Laughter]

423 **LM** Yeah, be just like Richard Branson [LD: yeah, that'd be me Richard
424 Branson]

425 **LH** Richard Branson!

426 **LD** Richard Branson, whatever his name is! [Laughter]

427 **AR** I don't know what I want to do , I want in that time I want to know I've
428 done everything that I wanna do I haven't got like a specific career
429 goal. I just don't want to be sat there in however many year's time
430 thinking I wish I'd done that when I had that opportunity that's the only
431 thing that I want I wanna be able to do what I want now.

432 **LM** Mine's also the fact that I don't wanna be stuck in one job from now
433 until I'm thirty

434 **LD** No, I want to try everything first

435 **AR** I couldn't be like want to be one of these people who like get a job at
436 eighteen and they're still doing it when they retire

437 **LD** No, no I could never do that in my whole life

438 **AM** So you think it's good to have lots of different jobs to get experience?

439 **LM** Cos then you've got it like, if you go for a job interview they say you've
440 got all this different type of experience as well..... [AR: Yeah] [LDD:
441 Yeah]

442 **LM**And you can go whichever way you want you can swing if you
443 wanted to do work in a hotel, work in a bar, work in a ship, You could
444 swing whatever way because you've got experience.

445 **LDD** Yeah definitely I want to have loads of jobs, I want to try everything
446 **LD** and I don't want to be stuck in an office cos that
447 **LDD** Oh God no I want to be out and about

448 **LD** I've done lots of office work and office work really does bore me, it's so
449 repetitive, I like to have a challenge I don't like to just sit in front of the
450 computer typing

451 **LM** I'm not that type of person I like to be interactive with people face to
452 face [LDD: yeah, definitely] dealing with people's problems, dealing
453 with customers

454 **AM** Well it's a people industry isn't it. ?

455 **LM** Yeah, that's why I'm training to do it. [LD: I love people, meeting new
456 people, so perfect for me]...Cos you said, different cultures as well.

457 **LD** Yeah, different cultures.

458 **AM** Do any of you think maybe in the future when any of you are in the
459 industry or whatever you're doing, whatever your position is, you might
460 need to get new qualifications , not necessarily you know fulltime, you
461 know retraining ?

462 **LM** Yeah I think if it's to do with the job you're doing then I'd retrain [LDD:
463 definitely].

464 **LD** The tourism industry is always changing so you're always, always
465 going to have to keep up with it and get new qualifications, new
466 experiences like but I'd like to

467 **LDD** Which would be fine because like if you really want a job, you'll train
468 and you'll do the best you can to get that position because you want
469 it... [LM: yeah, yeah].

470 **LDD** I think that's easier than sitting here and saying you've got all these
471 different things to do to finish a course, do you know what I mean?

472 **LD** Yeah, I think that's...that would be easy but I'd like to do day courses
473 as well [LDD: yeah] to help me like a First Aid day course like.
474 Because everybody [LM: needs First Aid] especially in a tourism
475 industry where it's just people, people, people, where you need, you
476 need that qualification so I'd like to do side qualifications like that

477 **LM** Yeah if it was to improve what kind of job [inaud] [LD: Yeah, definitely]
478 I'd willingly do it.

479 **LM** If I had to pay for it or whatever

480 **LD** Definitely, yeah, yeah, I'd pay for it

481 **AM** OK, Errrm, some of you have said you'd like to own your own business,
482 how many of you would imagine yourself being maybe being a
483 manager of some sort?

484 **AR? LH? LDD?** Oh yeah, I would be a manager before I started my own
485 business [yeah, yeah]

486 **LDD** but then manager is not my ideal because then you...you run the
487 business basically but you don't get the benefits of owning

488 **LD** No, I wanna be the big boss, owner

489 **LDD** the place, I wanna be the one that's

490 **LM** I would happily be a manager first cos you got [LDD: Yeah, I would
491 yeah] experience

492 **LDD** Yeah, experience

493 **LD** But I want to be the organ grinder, not the monkey

494 **LM** Yeah, tell someone what to do

495 **LDD** Yeah, it's true

496 **AM** OK, OK, and....I suppose, now, how important generally do you think
497 qualifications are in travel and tourism? We've talked about the value of
498 the AVCE,
499 **LH** Very
500 **LD** [No, no] No I don't think they are in travel and tourism
501 **LM** Not so much the course but the extra qualifications we get [Yeah, yeah]
502 like the ABTAC and the Galileo, that'll come in really useful.
503 **LD** Yeah, the extra qualifications, but to be fair, anyone can go and be a
504 rep, anyone can go and work in a bar, anyone can be a cabin crew go
505 and [AR: Travel and Tourism is more experience] anyone can do
506 anything in travel and tourism.
507 **AR** Yeah it's an experience industry rather than you need this this and this
508 **LD** Yeah, they look for experience as well as qualifications
509 **AM** People skills as well I suppose?
510 **AR** Yeah
511 **LDD** But then this will like, like we said before, this will put us in an interview
512 in front of the people who haven't got anything to do with tourism
513 **AM** Yeah, yeah so you can say you've done Galileo,...You understand
514 when they ...
515 **LDD** And if we've got like a basic, like we're doing the cabin crew which is
516 basic, obviously you've got to go into more depth training for it but
517 that's gonna put you higher than someone that's been, what, doing 'A'
518 levels or something totally different, English and Maths
519 **LM** It's like if you went to work in a travel agent and you had Galileo
520 behind you then they would be more likely to employ you cos they
521 wouldn't need to retrain you to use the system
522 **LD** No but that and they need like with certain qualifications that we're
523 getting, we're getting IATA point s and in certain like, in the travel
524 agents so many people need so many IATA point s for the business to
525 be able to run because otherwise...so, we will be, I don't know what the
526 word is, desirable to them. Cos we've got them IATA points that they
527 need. [AM: Yeah] They need us basically. We don't need them, they
528 need us. [Yeah, yeah]
529 **LH** It's like within a travel agents you need this course called ABTAC,
530 we've already got it behind us but other people haven't so they're going
531 to have to shell out money to pay for a course [LD: pay for a course]
532 whereas we've already got it
533 **LD** Galileo, that is really important
534 **LH** Yeah, whereas they are more likely to take on us than anyone else
535 because they are going to have to have...[LD: training] yeah, more
536 training
537 **AM** OK then. Just one more question I guess...How important do you think
538 qualifications are generally, not just in travel and tourism but kind of
539 any industry?
540 **LD** I think they are very very very important
541 **LH** It all starts with school. If you haven't got your GCSEs at school you
542 can't do your 'A' levels, if you haven't got your A levels you can't do
543 your degree and so it [inaud]

544 **AR** I think it depends on what way you look at it cos there's obviously
545 people like Richard Branson who never got the qualifications and he's
546 still done a hell of a lot

547 **LM** That's only one out of a handful

548 **AR** But I think you

549 **LD** You have to be very lucky

550 **AR** but I think it's obviously you need the qualifications to get into the job
551 then sometimes they're not as essential as people make them out to
552 be

553 **LDD** No, they're not essential

554 **LD** Sometimes experience may be better but like people who are going to
555 be like my dad never got any GCSEs and he's a bricklayer. Certain
556 jobs you don't need qualifications, you really don't

557 **LM** But at the same time you could always, it sounds like, you don't want
558 to work at the bottom but you can work your way up

559 **LD** Yeah

560 **LM** and then still be in the same place where the people with qualifications
561 come in, you would be at equal levels, do you know what I mean?

562 **LD** But I hope my qualifications get me... I don't want to be on the bottom
563 [inaud] I mean I hope my qualifications [LM: But as you've already
564 seen]

565 **LM** Some jobs you have to start at the bottom even if you've got a
566 qualification

567 **LD** I know but that isn't for me I don't think I don't want to be working from
568 the bottom

569 **AR** The way I look at it as well is in say like the four years you spent in
570 university you could spend that time working up and then later on errrr
571 you may get preference over the person who has got the qualifications
572 due to the fact that you've got

573 **LM** Experience

574 **AR** 4 years more experience while they've like just sat in a classroom.
575 [LM: cos what] It all depends what way you look at it to be honest

576 **LM** It depends on the job though doesn't it whether you need qualifications
577 or experience. If you wanted to be a teacher you'd have to go and get
578 the qualifications, you couldn't just do it on experience alone but so
579 much with like the travel and tourism industry most of it is just
580 experience

581 **LD** I don't disagree with that but I'd still like my education cos it means a lot
582 to me

583 **LDD** Cos I always think like if you've moving on a managerial level and
584 everyone else underneath you has been in the company for like what 4
585 years maybe 5 years

586 **LD** they're going to have more

587 **LDD** Because there's little things you just don't know about a company.
588 They're going to know, they're going to be teaching you anyway at the
589 end of the day even if you've got those qualifications

590 **LM** But it's like if you've got a degree you're always got something to fall
591 back on

592 **LD** Yeah yeah that's the thing

593 **LM** That's the only thing that's I want a degree for to be honest

594 **LD** It's a bit of security
595 **LM** But I couldn't do it
596 **AM** Yes it's that
597 **LD** [inaud]
598 **LM** security yeah
599 **AM** OK right, well thanks very much

APPENDIX FOUR~: MASTER LIST OF THEMES FROM STUDENT FOCUS GROUPS AND INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

Being practical and hands-on

‘I didn’t like loads of writing’

I was errrm I enjoyed school but I didn't like the whole like education part of it ok , no I did, but like I was more like practical I didn't like like loads of writing and exams and everything, I think that's why I chose to do this course. Cos it's more practical and there's a lot of chatting and. (LDD: FG1)

I didn't like the education side of it I didn't like the way they taught me. They taught me like writing and listening I teach by as LDD said the practical things so that's why I came to do this really. (LM: FG1)

It's like you don't want to be sat there with a piece of paper [You would rather be doing role plays or something like that (LDD: FG1))

I liked graphics, it was just...hands-on (DG: FG2)

And then I looked at all the other things and as I said I don't want to do no more school subjects. I don't want to do English again, I don't want to do Maths so that's when I thought I'll go for a completely different course and start brand new again (LH: interview)

There was lots and lots of practicals, mmm, it was just interesting, I just found it really good...I got along with the lecturers really well. Basically, everything, it was pretty straight forward, simple, and it was just something I enjoyed (MT: interview)

It [woodwork] was just good. I like doing stuff with my hands and making stuff (JP: interview)

‘I don’t want to be stuck in an office’

Cos that's what we want to do cos we want to be hands on with customers we don't want to be stuck in an office writing down like that shows what we want to be really (LDD: FG1)

and I don't want to be stuck in an office cos that... I've done lots of office work and office work really does bore me, it's so repetitive, I like to have a challenge I don't like to just sit in front of the computer typing (LD: FG1)

I'm not that type of person I like to be interactive with people face to face [LDD: yeah, definitely] dealing with people's problems, dealing with customers (LM: FG1)

But I can't see myself, like, being stuck in an office all day (BM: interview)

‘It was more like a workplace’

Oh, well I went to see three colleges [Laughter] and this was just outstanding,.... much better, to me, I loved the way it wasn't like school it didn't remind me of anything like school it was more ,like a work place and it was just brand new and all the facilities just excellent, that is just what drove me here, it's great because I mean I live a long way away as well and I travel here so it was just, it was just...(LDD: FG1)

Needing to be pushed and helped

‘They don’t push you as much as I’d like’

They don’t push you as much as you as I’d like them to but at the end of the day they are there for you. (AR: FG1)

But I feel like me and AR was talking about the other day that because we done so well last year like this year they’re just leaving us like saying well obviously if you done it last year then you can do it this year but it might not necessarily be the same. (LD: FG1)

I went to see one of the lecturers the other day about my grades and and it was. I was saying is there any way I can get my grades higher and it was like aren’t you happy with what you’ve got ? You’ve got an average mark.... And surely you should be the one pushing me saying no you can get the next mark up if you want it but they just didn’t seem bothered (AR: FG1)

Mines’ the case of last year you had more...the deadlines were more strict yet your work had to be on this date or you didn’t pass. This year it’s like hand it in whenever you can (yeah, yeah), so that’s what’s making me like (LM: FG1)

Really, I do need to be told, kicked up the arse basically. I need to be pushed cos otherwise I’m just gonna..... Yeah, I’m just gonna do what I’m doing, that’s not a lot (LD: FG1)

I used to get all my assignments in on time but now it’s like really...you have to get everything done on time and it’s too much to do. And it’s like complicated at times. You don’t know what you’re doing, what you’re writing. Some teachers they just give you feedback and say, ‘well, you haven’t put enough info in’ and they don’t tell you what you haven’t put in (SF: interview)

‘Them lecturers have always helped me’

I find that, you know the staffroom which is down the corridor? I always find that them lecturers in there they’ve always helped me quite a lot and pushed me from GNVQ and I’ve always asked for that extra help if they see that I’m lacking, so, like be on my case so I can actually fix up a bit so I actually continue to finish the course and they’ve always been there to help me do that. If they see that I’m coming in late they’re always like, what’s going on? (NP: FG3)

On my first year of this course I thought I didn’t do really well but I had the points to go on to the second year. I just, like, scraped over 240 points which is OK cos I wasn’t expecting that, I thought I’d get less. And, umm, yeah it’s Ok now as well. I’m working towards my points to get a higher grade than ‘Double E’. and I think I will get there if I try really, really hard, which I do. I mean, I do get all the help from the teachers as well. If I don’t understand anything I will always go back and say, ‘I don’t have a clue what this assignment or whatever is about’ and they’ll run through it and make notes with me. (TM: interview)

Being ‘Laid back’

Interviewer: “What was school like for you?”

DG: Laid back

Interviewer: Laid back?

DG: I didn’t really do much. I mean in Year 11 I just sat there really, talking. I wasn’t really...

EL: Yeah, that’s what it was like at my school. Year 11 was more catching up with coursework ? In year 7 you do loads of work and then in Year 11 you don’t do anything [General laughter] (FG2)

Interviewer: What about schoolwork, how did you get on with that?

SH: Well, I did well in my exams considering most lessons I was just messing about

NP: School, I thought, right, now that I'm older I find that it was more like a doss house back in my school because you find that you could just do anything, walk out the lessons and cos, like, the teachers, we had a lot of them, the cover teachers. So it's the case that towards the last years you was just happy to get out of school.

NPP: I really enjoyed school because, I don't know, cos it was like a doss going there

SS: Doing my GCSEs, I'm not very good at exams and I weren't like concentrating that much (FG2)

When you're younger you don't take school seriously. You, like, play about in the lessons. If you haven't got a teacher that's strict on you you're most likely to talk to your friends and just forget about the lesson (NP: interview)

They [teachers] said I was bright but I never really tried. But in the end I did try, done my work, and I got seven GCSEs (MT: interview)

I enjoyed it [school] until I got to secondary school and then I tended like...tended like to wag lessons and that when I reached Year 8 and Year 9 and then I started thinking about my career and that and I put my head down (BM: interview)

College as a 'buffer zone'

'I didn't want to go into work'

Mine was just a case of I thought I was going to go and work but then when it came to it I thought I don't want to be working yet, I want another two years of doing nothing really socialising with my mates and that's what it was [LDD: That is true] (LM: FG1)

No, I didn't want to go into work (LH: FG1)

You've got the rest of your life to work (LDD: FG1)

Interviewer: What made you decide to continue education after your GCSEs?

DG: So I didn't have to work (FG2)

I just didn't want to work so I thought college is easier and I didn't want to just sit at home and do nothing all these years so I thought I might as well stay in education (SH: FG3)

I realised I wasn't ready to from sixteen just be working straight through all my life. I wanted another little gap which this course has given me and a bit of extra education and qualifications hopefully to do better in a job (LDD: interview)

'What actually am I going to go into?'

No it wasn't always a decision for me I was, I would have thought that I would have got a job straight away but when it come to it I was thinking what actually am I going to go into? And I'd always wanted to do travelling and that so I thought I'll do 2 years and then I can get my job then, that's what I always thought (LDD: FG1)

I wanted to go to work I just didn't know what I wanted to do and I'd done leisure so I thought, and I enjoyed that so I thought I might as well just carry on that side of it (AR: FG1)

At the end of my year I did think about looking for a job so I did find a job, I went out and found a job and, but it was a part-time job [] We did do work experience but it was alright but I didn't feel I was ready to go into like full-time work (MT: interview)

Yeah, definitely. I was gonna do that [look for a job straight after school] but I couldn't make up my mind in the end and I just thought, I'll do travel and tourism (JP: interview)

'When you leave school not many places will employ you'

I didn't really think there was much of a choice because when you're like sixteen, or when you leave school, not many places will employ you because you haven't had that much experience because you've been at school all that time so it would have been really hard getting a job. So, I just thought college. It's another qualification, it'll be easier for me to get a job and I'll be older as well and have more experience. (MB: FG3)

FE as a result of parental / familial expectations

'My parents expected me to carry on'

After, like, doing my GCSEs my parents expected me to carry on...cos, like, all my cousins are 'A' star students and I haven't done so well so they expect me to get somewhere (NPP: FG3)

Qualifications are really important nowadays. Without qualifications you can't get nowhere so my parents were motivating me to go to college and do well. (SF: FG3)

I don't think they would have agreed with that [leaving school at 16 to get a job] cos my parents have always expected me to do education (TM: interview)

I knew that I was gonna go to college straight after school cos my Mum said that she wouldn't want me working just for the simple fact that when she was younger, my age, she ended up doing work and it took her a long time to go back to college (NP: interview)

I think I decided [to continue education after 16] when I was small cos that's like the way my family's raised, like, to go into education, to like better yourself (MT: interview)

'All my sisters have been to universities'

I wanted to go to further education because all my sisters have been to universities and colleges and I thought, well, if I be left out everyone's just gonna be picking on me so I just wanted to do, like, a different course and go to further education. (SS: FG3)

Wanting to travel

'I just love travelling'

Yeah, I've just always wanted to travel and live abroad and it just I just thought I want to do something that I'm going to be interested in enough to get a good mark at what I'm doing which maybe [Laughter] [inaud] but yeah that's what made me do it cos I love holidays (yeah) I just want to live a holiday life (LDD: FG1)

It's like I said earlier I'd done the leisure and I've always travelled a lot so it just seemed like I really enjoy my travelling so I thought it was like a logical (AR: FG1)

I love travelling [Yeah] (LD: FG1)

I just love travelling, that is what it's all about. (LDD: FG1)

I wanted to travel (DG: FG2)

Cos I like travelling I thought it would be ideal (NPP: FG3)

I really enjoy travelling. I love going on holiday. I love the whole idea of being in different countries, staying in hotels and that so I thought Travel and Tourism (MB: interview)

A lot of my Dad's friends work in the travel...like they own hotels ...it was just, I kinda look up to them so... It looked interesting. It looked better than going doing Maths and English. So, I thought I'll do travel and I wanna travel the world anyway (LM: interview)

That's the one thing I wanted to do when I came into this, that's the one thing I knew I wanted to do when I came to this course is to go abroad and travel and go, go different places (MT: interview)

MT: Just the idea of [JP: travelling] travelling, seeing different countries and sites and cultures [JP: visiting new people, seeing different people] (JP and MT: interview)

I was like...I was fascinated with travel around the world and that so I thought I'd do, like, this course (BM: interview)

'I wanted to do Cabin Crew'

Cos I travel a lot so it's something I've always wanted to, especially Cabin Crew (AH: FG2)

I wanted to do Cabin Crew (KC: FG2)

I just wanted to do air cabin crew and it hasn't changed (SH: FG3)

I want to be air cabin crew (SS: FG3)

What it was, from when I was younger I knew I wanted to be air cabin crew but when...as I got older I realised there wasn't a course specified in that like title. So, when I managed to speak to a teacher in my school they stated to me that Travel and Tourism has a wider range. With that you won't do just cabin crew, you could also go into all kinds of different industries (NP: interview)

Needing a clean break

'I wanted a fresh break'

Mine was also like because nobody from school had come here....Even though I really got on with my mates at school, it was like, I just wanted somewhere totally different from them because to make [LDD: a new...] a new set of friends to make totally meet totally different people (LM: FG1)

That's another reason why I [inaud] I wanted a fresh break.....I wanted a clean break from everything at school I hated. (LD: FG1)

It (case study college) had a better reputation than the others and also I wanted to get away from where everyone else was going...but the reputation mainly (DG: FG2)

I chose this one because everyone in my school, they were all going to [local college] [SH: Get out man, leave them behind]. I just wanted to leave them and, like be able to make new friends and just prosper in a different way and see if I can concentrate a bit more cos I used to doss about more at school, take life more seriously. So I thought if I, like, depart from them then I'll be able to carry on with my life a different way (NP: FG3)

I think if I'd stayed at school I wouldn't have felt like I was maturing in any way because it was still school basically, the only difference was I wasn't wearing any school clothes, so I think coming to college will help me grow up a bit (MB: interview)

At one point it did cross my mind [doing 'A' levels]. I think that was more like 'Shall I stay here?' It's the easy option, I know everyone, I know the school, but I thought I've had enough of [inaud] the school life and still being in that school environment with the younger kids and everything. I just thought I want to go and meet new people somewhere different and I think they treat you like you're more of an adult here. I had that impression when I saw the college anyway. That's why I decided to do this. (LDD: interview)

I didn't know anyone here and that's exactly what I wanted (LD: interview)

It [school life] was just long for me. It was just one of them ones where I had to get out and I couldn't wait to get to college. I knew where I...what I wanted to do in my last year (MT: interview)

'They all wanted different things to what I wanted'

You do it throughout your life, don't you? You're not going to cling on to the same people all the time. I still saw them but you just drift apart really. You make new friends, you make better friends so now I've got way better friends than what I had before and plus they all wanted different things to what I wanted. So it was kind of like 'I'm going now' and that was it really. (LH: interview)

I came to this college on my own with none of my friends whatsoever. I mean, when I started to apply for college as well, I mean it was just me by myself applying for them. There were other girls, obviously, of the year applying but there was only me out of my friends or group cos they wanted to go straight into work and I didn't want to go straight into work (TM: interview)

The value of 'hot knowledge'

'You talk to people around and that'

Interviewer: How did you hear of its (case study college) reputation?

DG: Through the schools advisor and you talk to people around and that (FG2)

My Mum, the working environment that she works in, she's got a friend that works in the library and they deal with OFSTED reports and she had a bit more knowledge about the OFSTED reports. That is why she looked at this college and it had a high...a good rate (NP: interview)

My Auntie's a career's advisor and she was telling me the options and probably would have said [case study college] would be your best bet for the kind of course that you want to do. So I think that's what made me choose here (LDD: interview)

Just other people going to it around my area. Just, a lot of people mention it, like it's the best college in [Case Study College city] and that (MT: interview)

'I heard about it through friends'

I heard about it through friends that had been to the college previously. Quite a few people said it was good, so...(KC: FG2)

Mainly just through friends who've been here before and my parents (AH: FG2)

Mainly through teachers and careers advisors and friends that had come here (JH: FG2)

I heard it from, like, friends and I've heard it a couple of times on the radio. I heard it was a really good college so I didn't want to go to, like, the other colleges like [local college] and [local college] (SS: FG3)

I come here cos I heard it's got a good reputation through friends and family (TM: FG3)

I heard from friends and family about this college (MB: FG3)

I heard about it on the radio and my friend's sister came here doing the same course. They were telling me [inaud] she's going to work abroad for a year and I thought that sounds like this, cool (MB: interview)

I actually heard off a friend of a friend and they said they did the cookery course and I thought, oh, that sounds like a good college so I'll go (LH: interview)

Cos [case study college] has got a good name as well. Cos I've got a friend next door. Her daughter studied in [case study college]. She studied Food Management, I think and she owns her own hotel now. She was telling me and I was like, 'Oh great. She must have been working hard then?' and she said 'Yeah, it was a good college so she was motivated to the right standard' (SF: interview)

One of my friends from school told me about it that she was going cos I was planning on just going to see the local coll.. well, this is, was, local for me, like [local college] and where else did I put down for? I think I just put down for [local college] and then this college. My friend told me about here and as it specialises and that, I thought it's got to be the best one really (LD: interview)

'My sister came to this college'

My sister came to this college. And I came in one of the days and thought mmmh, and cos it's near to my house I thought it's a nice college so I might as well (SH: FG3)

'My dad wanted me to go to this college'

Cos my Dad works in this area like he knew around, what's about here and he just wanted me to go to this college cos it specialises in Travel and Tourism as well so he told me about it (NPP: FG3)

My parents actually chose this college for me. I applied for another couple of colleges actually. My parents have always come with me to colleges and schools that I've chosen. My parents didn't agree with other colleges, like the way that some lecturers spoke and like some students outside. Cos you can tell from the first impression when you go into a college. My parents didn't like it. (TM: interview)

It was kinda thing, my Dad showed me this college when I was in Year 9 and he said, this is the kind of course for you. Because he's like a teacher and a lot of his students come here as well (LM: interview)

Friendship is important

‘I enjoyed school but I only mainly went to see my mates’

I enjoyed school but I only mainly went to see my mates...(LM: FG1)

I had such a good time there was like a group of like 8 of us we was always together and that is what made my school life what it was [LH: Yeah] cos I used to go to school for them and like in every class we was all the same ability so we was like in the same group. It was great, loved it. (LDD)

Yeah, exactly like mine, I just absolutely loved it. (LH: FG1)

I love my friends [Laughter] they were what made my school days [LDD: Yeah, that's what I'll always remember it for] That's why I went I went to socialise I went to have fun with my friends. There was about 20/30 of us (LM: FG1)

‘It's a lot of socialising at college’

I didn't know anyone when I started here and now I know everyone and that just feels great after 2 years down the line to think (LDD: FG1)

I met someone now I'm closer now the first day I started so I was quite lucky in that way. [LD: and me] (LM: FG1)

Ah, I love everyone here, [LDD: yeah, definitely] everyone in our year we get on with everyone in every class, [yeah] everyone is fantastic and from when we went to France last year on a school [inaud] I can't believe how close everyone really is now it's just amazing [LM: especially since Benidorm] (LD: FG1)

It's because you're there to support each other. You're there to help each other especially when you're away (LH: FG1)

You definitely become a lot closer and it just feels great to be able to like you know if you come in one day and your close friends weren't here there would always be someone, there's always someone there (LDD: FG1)

If all these weren't here... there'd be a million and one people you could be with in the class and no-one would like (LD: FG1)

Because we're all the same type of people were all like extroverts, were all like mad and (laughter) (LDD: FG1)

It is a lot of socialising you know at college because we've got the hours we do and it's a lot of like free time and a lot of having fun (LDD: FG1)

I'd say I'm behind [with coursework] to be honest. Cos I haven't... because I've been socialising more often, well, a lot more often than catching up with the assignments, it's making me go far behind (JP: interview)

‘I wouldn't want to go through college on my own’

I don't know cos one of my best mates I met on the very first day, so it's hard to say but I don't think I would have if they weren't as nice as they are. So, I don't know. (LM: interview)

No. I don't think I would. After the first year, if I hadn't had the friends that I've made I don't think I would have... I would have just thought... I completed the first year and I got to a point where I can't be bothered to keep doing assignments and everything but when I passed all my exams and got good grades for everything that's what made me come back but I think my friends did as well. So, I think if there hadn't been anybody there I might have been more likely to say 'Right, I've had enough now. I'll go and get a job' (LDD: interview)

No. Cos I wouldn't have wanted it to be like school at all. I'd have left if I hadn't liked it definitely. I wouldn't want to go through college on my own (LD: interview)

If I didn't get along with people I wouldn't like think about carrying on with my course [inaud] to drop out (BM: interview)

Strong student—teacher relationships

'They are lovely. They're more like friends'

They are lovely, they're more like friends though [yeah, yeah] [LDD: Which is nice] I don't really see them as lecturers, maybe you shouldn't but I see them more as a friend than a lecturer (LD: FG1)

But other I think they are very friendly... [LD: they are fantastic] you can go and if you've got any problems they will help you and they'll give it their all really, so (LDD: FG1)

Yes, I would always say they are more like my friends (LH: FG1)

Yeah, they are more my friends than my lecturers. I can't see them as my lecturers. (LD: FG1)

I think it'd be really weird if they shouted at me or something like that. I don't see them like they're higher than me if you know what I mean. (LD: FG1)

Yeah, it's just like popping into the staffroom [Hi, Hi] [LD: Sit down]. Just leave my stuff here, have a little chat. They know everything don't they? (LH: FG1)

We can go and chat to the lecturers about anything and at school you couldn't do that. Here's more of a friendly relationship. Back at school it was just teacher and student. You didn't have like a connection or a bond between each other so it made it hard to speak to them. But here you haven't got any problems speaking to them about anything, especially work (LM: interview)

I come in and I spoke to [lecturer] she really, like, helped me with it. She was the one that, well, made me come to this college. I got to know [lecturer] she's really friendly and, like, told me everything that I needed (BM: interview)

'I know the tutors, how they are like'

Not really [about doing HE at another institution]. Cos I've known this college for like three years now. I know the tutors, how they are like (SF: interview)

So, it's like, I haven't even considered any other universities cos I love all the teachers here and some of the teachers that have taught me will be teaching me as well over in...on that side (LD: interview)

Yeah, I know the people, know the lecturers and most, well, I should think one lecturer or one or two of the lecturers will be teaching on that course anyway so I'm gonna see them again so

they will know my face so it will be even easier than going somewhere new [inaud] different (MT: interview)

The importance of part-time work

Balancing work and study

I'm still studying at night, I'm still coming from college the days working. I'm only working till 7.00 latest or 4.30 some of the days. I can go home and work again, so it's not like it's stopping me from doing anything. It's helping me really because if I went home at 3.00, knowing me I'd probably just stick the TV on and that would be it whereas now I'm going to work, I'm keeping myself awake, keeping myself motivated to do some work and so it's better off for me really (LH: interview)

I only work for like 4 hours each day. The only problem is I can't wake up really early to go in . That's the only problem I have. (TM: interview)

I do that [part-time job] about 24 hours per week [] cos my manager's really education orientated so he said if you ever need time off to do your work just tell me. So he's really understanding with the whole...I've got to do my college work (LM: interview)

I only do about 9—12 hours depending on how many hours they put me down for cos normally I don't get hours. They only put me down, like, 9 hours each week. I don't mind anyway cos I'm a full-time student, I gotta do a lot of courseworks as well (SF: interview)

Well, the things is, I am balancing quite well but you see, cos I work 15 hours Friday, Saturday, Sunday I have problems now with my coursework. Cos I sometimes need a day just to do my coursework and have time to think about things [] Cos Friday, Saturday, Sunday that is my working time for me to make my money. I did want to reduce my hours but if I do I think I won't be able to have that social life that I like to have (NP: interview)

Yeah, it's fine. Like, I only work two or three nights a week so it's fine (LDD: interview)

It's just easy because it's flexible. It's not like most people's jobs where they have to go at a certain time whereas if I have coursework, I can say, oh no I can't do it or I can leave it for a month (MT: interview)

Part-time work as a learning experience

Obviously with travel, everyone's travelled, everyone's been to different places, so it's like work's helping me as well. I'll ask them a question, 'Oh, we did Human Resources, what would you do about this?' And they would help me. Cos, like, Butlins. Most people at work have been to Butlins so they would help me by telling them what's there. So it's kinda good really cos I've got such great friendships with everyone at work, even my manager. We all get on really well so like I help them, they help me. Then, they help me with my work as well. I could sit there in my lunch hour and do my work and they'd help me. (LH: interview)

I think retail management is a business that never ends. Cos retail's always in business no matter where you go. Like the Bullring's open. That's retail, most of the stuff. I think retail's always in business. Like, tourism one day, cos what happened on the 11th, 12th of the 11th it... does affect travel and tourism in a way. I think it's always dropping its profits and going up and I don't wanna be in a job where you get bankrupt or something. I wanna be in a job where it's always in business, for example retail. (TM: interview)

Yeah. Cos I'm a salesperson it becomes easier to write about the roles of holiday reps when they have to sell and what they have to do. So, in a weird way it has kind of contributed to my work (LM: interview)

I've gained a lot of experience on tills and marketing sides, promotions and how they do their customer service. And we normally have to do a card thing for the company. It's hard work that is. You gotta explain every single bit and you gotta explain about the account cover and stuff. It's a lot of things but you learn a lot more while you're doing it (SF: interview)

When we did customer services I knew everything with customer services and human resources because it's the case that I'm used to doing it at work and watching how the procedures work at work with human resources and how it all gets put together (NP: Interview)

I'm really enjoying that, it's really good. And that helps me as well. It's helped me with, like, confidence, customer service and hospitality and that (LDD: interview)

Yeah, well good customer service skills obviously. It's enhanced my customer service skills. And what else? Mainly meeting new people. It's arrange of stuff that's involved. It's like... and cos it's like a big industry thing places like the NIA, ICC big places like that so I really know the basis of how they work and the structure and stuff and it helps me with my course so...cos that's what it's all about, it's tourism and getting out there and experiences, so it really helps (MT: interview)

It's like, treat people fair. Don't, like, tend to pick on people or anything like that. Treat everyone like how you would like to be treated. Someone less fortunate, try, like, to help them (BM: interview)

The value of short industry-related qualifications

'They haven't just gave us a set qualification'

Because we, because the qualifications we'll get we get like the set qualification but we also get like additional ones [Additional ones] so if we go into a job interview we're going to get picked over the people who haven't got them qualifications sort of give us a head start even if we left now and didn't go on and like Uni [Yeah] like some of them are going to do (LD: FG1)

They haven't just gave us a set qualification (AR: FG1)

Not so much the course but the extra qualifications we get...[Yeah, yeah] like the ABTAC and the Galileo, that'll come in really useful. (LM: FG1)

But then this will like, like we said before, this will put us in an interview in front of the people who haven't got anything to do with tourism (LDD: FG1)

And if we've got like a basic, like we're doing the cabin crew which is basic, obviously you've got to go into more depth training for it but that's gonna put you higher than someone that's been, what, doing 'A' levels or something totally different, English and Maths (LDD: FG1)

It's like if you went to work in a travel agent and you had Galileo behind you then they would be more likely to employ you cos they wouldn't need to retrain you to use the system (LM: FG1)

No but that and they need like with certain qualifications that we're getting, we're getting IATA point s and in certain like, in the travel agents so many people need so many IATA point s for the business to be able to run because otherwise... so, we will be, I don't know what the

word is, desirable to them. Cos we've got them IATA points that they need. [AM: Yeah] They need us basically. We don't need them, they need us. [Yeah, yeah] (LD: FG1)

It's like within a travel agents you need this course called ABTAC, we've already got it behind us but other people haven't so they're going to have to shell out money to pay for a course [LD: pay for a course] whereas we've already got it (LH: FG1)

I think the additional qualifications will go further as well (general agreement) than the actual AVCE (KC: FG2)

I think it shows more that you've got more whastit about you (general agreement) to do the additional stuff than what just that does, the AVCE (EL: FG2)

They've got ABTAC and stuff. That gets you into specific jobs (KC: FG2)

[] you can do air cabin crew as well. I mean it helps you really cos the air cabin crew cos basically the course...we do go on the P.A system and things like that cos the teacher has been air cabin crew in a previous life and like it's really good cos she knows what she's learning us and like gives us examples all the time and like if you go for an interview you know what you're doing (TM: interview)

But whereas with other colleges it never had such great positive feedbacks with the courses and like what extra qualifications you can get at the end of it. And I thought if I come in I can get extra, why go to a college where I can get less? (NP: interview)

We even have extra courses that we're doing on top of what...our course already like stuff like Galileo and courses like Air Cabin Crew, that's the one where, if you apply, you get the link to Thompsons and you'll get an interview, guaranteed interview. So it's just...there's lots...(MT: interview)

Cos there's this new course out [] Air Cabin Crew and it's called Qualification To Do Air Hostess...Air Steward. She says that we're really lucky that we've got that cos they haven't done it in previous years [] so that's gonna be really good for getting a job. She told us that some people applied and they got the job straight away because they had that qualification (JP: interview)

'If it's to do with the job you're doing then I'd retrain'

Yeah I think if it's to do with the job you're doing then I'd retrain [LDD: definitely]. (LM: FG1)

The tourism industry is always changing so you're always, always going to have to keep up with it and get new qualifications, new experiences like but I'd like to (LD: FG1)

Which would be fine because like if you really want a job, you'll train and you'll do the best you can to get that position because you want it... [LM: yeah, yeah]. (LDD: FG1)

Yeah, I think that's...that would be easy but I'd like to do day courses as well [LDD: yeah] to help me like a First Aid day course like. Because everybody [LM: needs First Aid] especially in a tourism industry where it's just people, people, people, where you need, you need that qualification so I'd like to do side qualifications like that (LD: FG1)

Yeah if it was to improve what kind of job [inaud] [LD: Yeah, definitely] I'd willingly do it. (LM: FG1)

If you want a job and you have to do it then I don't mind doing it if I have to...cos if it's gonna better yourself you might as well, innit? (SH: FG3)

If someone does tell me to do, like, a course, I mean I will do it. To get myself a good job and everything I will actually go there and do something about it (TM: interview)

I wouldn't mind doing the training, obviously, for the job that I'm looking to do but I wouldn't wanna do another qualification, that would be too long (NP: interview)

Wanting to be 'out there' in the industry

'I can't do any more education'

I know now that university is not for me, because, like I feel that the educational side of it I've come to the end for me cos like sitting here and doing assignments and exams. That's why I don't want to do university... (LDD: FG1)

Mine's the same as LDD's. I can't do any more education. I've had enough of sitting in classrooms writing... (LM: FG1)

I'm the same as these two really. I've had enough of me being sat in the classroom and I think it's very unlikely that in the future I will come back to education... (AR: FG1)

I've sort of passed the amount of work that I think I can do basically, if you get what I mean. I couldn't cope with uni or a degree or anything like that, so... (DG: FG2)

Yeah, I was thinking about it (HE) but... like Donna I've just done too much further education. I just don't want to really do it any longer. (AH: FG2)

No, I'm the same as Donna. I'm past education now. I can't do any more than I have, so... (EL: FG2)

I don't want to go to uni because I feel I've been into education for so long that I don't think I can cope going to uni and spending another 3 or 4 years down the line (SS: FG3)

It's getting to the end of the year now. I'm not that motivated to do anything any more. I'm only doing it because I have to. I'd rather be with my friends out, It's what everyone wants to do. So, if I'm slowing down now and I can't be bothered to do it now, how am I gonna feel when I've got something even harder? (LH: interview)

I don't wanna spend all my life in education really (JP: interview)

'I just want to be out there now'

I'm definitely going to get a job, what job that is I don't know errm I mean I, I'd love to work abroad and I've.. I'm doing cabin crew so I'd love to apply for something like that. Errm, I really don't know. The world's my oyster (LDD: FG1)

I just, I want to do a bit of everything. I mean I don't know what I'm going to do when I leave college straight away but next March I want to apply to go repping for the seasons and then when I come back see what's going on after that and then probably work in a Travel Agents and then work in the airport and then I want to move away and, like, work abroad full-time [AM: Right]. (LM: FG1)

I just want to be out there now doing it ermm...not necessarily the money side of it but I think it's just gonna.. I'm just bored of the whole environment. Like LM said, I've been doing it since I was like five, like the last thirteen years, I just want a change. (AR: FG1)

Qualifications are valuable

‘I don’t want to be on the bottom’

I don’t want to be on the bottom (LD: FG1)

Rather than having to work from the bottom and work my way up I hope to be like further in, if you get me. I want to do it [degree] in Hospitality Management and so that would save me from starting at the very bottom. I can come in somewhere between halfway rather than straight from the bottom (MB: interview)

I think after college I would know but I’m gonna get the higher standard job that I wanna get. So I think if I do a course, for instance if I do a degree, I know where I stand and I know what I’m doing (TM: interview)

I’m hoping to get something what I can go further with. If I get a degree then obviously I’m gonna start my own business. Because obviously I should know by the time I finish what I’m doing. If I don’t know what I’m doing I might as well not join the course (SF: interview)

You can still get a job that way [without an HE qualification] and work your way up in that job but I would prefer just to go uni so at least it doesn’t take me longer in the stages, like working as a sales assistant then a supervisor [inaud] when I go there even though I’ll be a sales assistant I can just work up quickly cos I’ve got that ability to do that and I’ve got the qualifications to go higher more than the other people that’s probably just left college with just a standard qualification like an AVCE (NP: interview)

I want an education. I wanna...I like to learn new things. I wanna learn as much as I can (LD: interview)

No-one can say they [qualifications] are not important cos if I went for an interview and they went for an interview and I’ve got a degree, then I’m going to get chosen over them. Well, I think I would be.[]Experience is important but I think that education is as well. I do think that it’s very important. (LD: interview)

Cos then the more likely you are to get a good job and good money rather than if you’ve got nothing and bad grades then you’re going to have to work your way up and it’s going to be longer (SH: FG3)

I hope to...after I get my degree, I hope to move on further to move on further to become a management , kind of like the management side of a hotel or a hotel chain or them kind of sides (MT: interview)

‘I’ll be making bigger money’

My ideal job would be something that involves a good, well-paid job basically. Something where I can become a manager of something for example, I don’t know, in retail. Even if I’m just a deputy manager that would be OK as long as it’s well-paid. (TM: interview)

When I was speaking to [member of staff] I asked her what course could I do after this course and I spoke to her and told her what I want to do, what kind of job I want to be involved in and basically what kind of money I’m looking at cos with air cabin crew I’ve realised it’s not really much of a good rate of pay (NP: interview)

More education you’ve got, better money you’re on, isn’t it? (JP: interview)

Someone told me that with doing this degree, like, they give you like errr, work, like, after you get your degree they put you on a placement for a week, working in an organization, like. If

they're impressed with what you have to offer and that, they take you on. So, if they do take you on you'll start with, like, £26,000 basic (BM: interview)

Wanting worthwhile experiences

'I want to be the organ grinder, not the monkey'

I know, by the time I'm thirty I would absolutely love to own my own bar and restaurant ermm and just be living it up in a different country, that's what I'd absolutely love to be doing, no doubt about it. (LDD: FG1)

I want to be abroad and I want to be owning my own business whether it be a bar or a restaurant or a hotel and I want my own business, I just...independent woman living abroad. (LD: FG1)

...manager is not my ideal because then you...you run the business basically but you don't get the benefits of owning... the place, I wanna be the one that's (LDD: FG1)

I want to be the organ grinder, not the monkey (LD: FG1)

Mine's the extreme, I want to own my hotel chain if I lived in my own ideal world. (LM: FG1)

I would like to, if it was a dream world, own a bar somewhere like the south of France. But in reality I'll probably be stuck in an office job, nothing to do with travel and tourism! (LM: interview)

I hope I can get a business by that time [aged 30] and then settle my life and then probably run a business. Probably get a small retail shop somewhere. Then transport...cos my uncle is working in the shipyards down in Sri Lanka so if I get him to send me all the items down here, he'll just send me all the products. And then I can just do my own business then (SF: interview)

[owning your own bar] You'd say all the rules, you wouldn't have to be told by anyone else. You employ your staff and, you know, you can do the hands-on, you could be working with them or you could be behind the scenes, so you can do either thing and you can have holidays and time off whenever you like (LDD: interview)

Something that I can call my own. Something that I have worked for. It's all mine, that's what I want (LD: interview)

My ideal job? It would be owning my own hotel, hopefully a nice chain of hotels. A reasonable, you know, a well known hotel abroad, definitely abroad, it has to be abroad. Somewhere hot and nice (MT: interview)

I would love to open my own bar abroad [] I've been thinking about doing a bar and getting unsigned acts, like music acts who haven't signed to companies yet to come and perform to, like, open my thing (MT: interview)

[Ideal job] Working in a hotel or opening my own business, something like that (BM: interview)

I want to try everything

I just want a bit of everything while I'm young [AM: Yeah, yeah] before...otherwise I'll look back and think, I should have done that, I should have done that. (LM: FG1)

I don't know what I want to do , I want in that time I want to know I've done everything that I wanna do I haven't got like a specific career goal. I just don't want to be sat there in however many year's time thinking I wish I'd done that when I had that opportunity that's the only thing that I want I wanna be able to do what I want now. (AR: FG1)

Mine's also the fact that I don't wanna be stuck in one job from now until I'm thirty (LM: FG1)

I couldn't be like want to be one of these people who like get a job at eighteen and they're still doing it when they retire (AR: FG1)

Yeah definitely I want to have loads of jobs, I want to try everything (LD: FG1)

I don't think I could stay in one job to be honest, it would do my head in (DG: FG2)

There's so much you can do as well, so try everything (EL: FG2)

I would like to do quite a few [jobs] actually so I can say I've been this and I've been that and I know what the industry is about. I wouldn't like to be in the one job until I retire. I'd like to change a bit and get a feel for some other stuff as well. (MB: interview)

As I'm unsure about anything at the moment, I think I'm at that age where I'm really not bothered what I do. My main aim would be to travel so I would like to have a job, earn some money and then travel then experience with different jobs, see what I enjoy. Cos I don't know, I've only had one job, I wouldn't know what I like really. And then go for my main career then. But I wanna try things. (LH: interview)

I love being somewhere I don't know where I am and everything is new. Eating out is new. The bars and clubs you go to are all new. I just love that. I love the different cultures seeing how they live, different to us. How we rush around to work. I've been to the Caribbean, they're so laid back and I just love that. I love to see how people live their lives. And I think working out there would make you different, you might be different. I want to see what that's like (LDD: interview)

I don't really want a career as such because I don't want to stay in a job for the rest of my life. I want to move from job to job because like when people say, like, they've been doing like, a builder for about fifty years that just sounds boring, doing the same... I can't be doing with that, I need to move on. Cos you've got more to talk about when you're older, haven't you? All the different careers that you've had (JP: interview)

'Something rewarding'

Interviewer: What sort of job do you think you might be looking at if you're not looking at uni?

DG: I don't know, an adventure camp or something. I don't know... something where it's not the same everyday, where it's always different and... variety of things (FG2)

Interviewer: What sort of job would you like to be doing ideally by the time you are 30?

DG: Something rewarding (FG2)

Something that I've worked towards and like deserved probably...just something I've really worked at and worked up the ladder to get to (EL: FG2)

Something you enjoy doing [general agreement], not just 9—5 boring jobs but that you enjoy doing (AH: FG2)

Not something that's a task to get out of bed in the morning to go to [general agreement]. You don't want to go anymore and stuff like that, that's what you really want to do (EL: FG2)

Something different as well, not the same routine every day (KC: FG2)

I don't want to have a job that I don't enjoy just for the money. I want a job that I'm going to enjoy. That's probably why I do lots of different things, cos if I get bored I just move on and I'm going to go for the enjoyment part of a job not the money side of things, especially when I'm younger anyway (LDD: interview)

I just like to try everything. I don't want to go into a job and like most people I know hate their job. What's the point you going to work for nearly the rest of your life until you retire. I wanna do something that I enjoy. I don't want to be stuck in a job and get up in the morning and think I don't want to go into work, I want to do a job that I enjoy (LD: interview)

'Orphan' ideas

'Here they're actually specific in tourism'

I went to look around it [local college]. It looked like a school! I thought ugh, I'm not coming here. And then I just thought, cos this specialises in Travel and Tourism and vocational studies it would be a better place to go than just a normal college (MB: interview)

Everyone was going to [local college] and I was the only one going here and I'm so glad that I did. Cos they only do 'A' levels there whereas here they're actually specific in tourism whereas there they had teachers who do English and Tourism as well and I didn't want that. I wanted someone who knew exactly what they were going to be talking about to me and that's why I chose this place (LH: interview)

Cos this college has got a good rate. I don't think they would just take anyone from any school (NP: interview)

When I saw this course was available and this college was specific for that, like, tourism, I just, I didn't think twice (LDD: interview)

So I thought, being as it specialises in tourism and stuff it must be good at what it does (MT: interview)

So I decided to come to this college cos it was... I know it's quite far to travel but it's a good college and it's good for travel and tourism (JP: interview)

I come to the Open Day cos, like, I heard it was ranked in the top college and like, the name of the college and, like, tourism—I thought that's related with travel as well (BM: interview)

'I like it cos its central'

I like it cos it's central. I can do shopping in my break (MB: interview)

That's true. Based in town instead of travelling. Cos like [local college] you have to go into town and then get another bus. It's like half an hour there and half an hour... it's an hour really (SS: FG3)

And plus it's handy for me cos I work in town as well. So, if I finish college at 3.00 I can go and work after work as well. So it was really handy whereas if I'd gone to [local college] it would have been just [local college] whereas at college here I've only got to go down the road and I'm at work again, so it was really handy for me. (LH: interview)

This college is near to my house. I live in Handsworth it only takes 15 minutes on the bus and, no, it's not really interest me by changing uni (TM: interview)

They [parents] started telling me as well, they said, 'it's best to go somewhere nearby as well'. It's only 15 minutes away from my home so it's not much travelling. With like [local college] and [local college] it's like one hour drive or one and a half hours on the bus. They go 'you might as well go somewhere that is near and that you feel comfortable with' (SF: interview)

My reason was one because it was like the best college for the course but the other one was because it's in the centre of town it's not like there's nothing to do so in your lunches there's always something you can do there's always something going on and there's like one of my mates came here before and she was telling me about the social life side of it so (LM: FG1)

I live around about ten minutes away from the college so I walk it most mornings, so it's alright. It's alright, it's really good (MT: interview)

'The work's spread out'

Some lecturers tend to say things like we don't think you should be suitable to do the exam in this month but if you work through your work through these months I'll give it to you in another month or so. I mean, you can't do it and...yeah, that's Ok really cos at the end of the day, if they think I need more time that's alright. They know best innit? (TM: interview)

So my friends were recommending me to go to [case study college], they do these courses, diplomas and stuff. You can get somewhere there, you know. You get all them times to do them but with 'A' levels you gotta do it otherwise you won't get a grade at all (SF: interview)

All my friends were going on to do 'A' levels originally and I thought I want to be with my friends but, like, I knew I was not going to be able to handle 'A' levels. Here the work's spread out. In 'A' levels it's different subjects. I wouldn't have been able to cope with that (LM: interview)

Cos at the moment I'm on 380 [points] and you need 480 to pass the course but she says she thinks I won't have no problems getting a 'Double EE' (NP: interview)

To be honest, I do actually try hard in my assignments but sometimes I really don't cos I've just got so much work, so much work on my head and sometimes I just don't really concentrate on my assignments. I just give them in like I've done a brief description of everything. I just give it in and then when I get it back I just do my improvements cos then I know what I'm doing. I sometimes just don't do my assignments to the standards that I could do. (TM: interview)

They [lecturers] make it easier for you. They teach you, like, as if they were teaching themselves and break it down easier and give us, like, helpful tips, notes, anything to help us. We can go and ask them questions without feeling scared, so, it's alright (MT: interview)

False starts

Cos I went to a first college, Cadbury, and I went there for three months and then I went into work and then I come back, into this college [] but I just didn't like the atmosphere there so I just left, went into work and didn't like the work so I come back to college (MT: interview)

I went to another college, done another course [] I done Painting and Decorating which I got my qualification for that and I done Motor Vehicling and I done my F.A Cup Coaching Certificate as well (BM: interview)

‘Travel and Tourism is for girls, isn’t it?’

Cos travel and tourism is for girls, isn't it? Cos if you look at Air Stewards, Air Hostesses and all that, it's a women's job, like doing travel agents and all that, you never see hardly any lads (JP: interview)

...I think it's the... what side, what do you call it? Air Cabin Crew that attracts the air hostesses, that attracts the women mostly. Cos half... I'd say about eighty percent of them want to go into Air Cabin Crew and all the rest of it... but whereas the boys, I'd say they're not going into that as much. I would say they are going into higher to get, like, further in the chain, like management jobs and stuff. But I think that's what attracts most of the girls cos that's what they're here for, the Air Cabin Crew and stuff like that (MT: interview)

‘My Mum said...’

My mum's been asking a lot lately what I'm doing but I can't decide, it's too late (JP: interview)

... My mum was happy for me, she was like, if that's something you enjoy then carry on with it [] He [father] basically sees it the same way but he's just travelling all the time, working overseas so whenever he sees me he's like 'whatever'. He's just happy, happy to know I'm alive (MT: interview)

My mum is the one that studied. She's the one that tells me to do my studying. Studying, studying, studying, that's the key for you (BL: interview)

If I was just going [to study at the case study college] for the sake of it my mum would be like, 'What are you doing, go out and get a job' [] My mum come with me here [case study college] and my mum absolutely loved it here (LH: interview)

I knew I was gonna go to college straight after school cos my mum said that she wouldn't want me working just for the simple fact that when she was younger and she was my age she ended up doing work and then it took her a long time to go back to college (NP: interview)

Cos my mum's educated as well. She goes, 'education's very important'. Because she got married in the early years as well and she left education because of marriage. She doesn't want the same thing to happen to me [] My mum's really, really forcing me to go on to uni. She's like 'You have to go to uni' [] 'cos, like, if you're holding a degree in this country then no-one's gonna ask you no questions' [] My dad... he doesn't say much, he just wants me to go to uni and he just says everything to my mum and my mum just tells me. That's how it goes (SF: interview)

‘I don’t reckon we don’t get no support whatever’

I don't reckon we get no support whatsoever. Even if you... I know you've got to ask but some of them just use excuses like they're busy (JP: interview)

‘Other people are on their back as well’

I reckon some of the lecturers rush it because [JP: we're being rushed] I know the teachers have got a guideline to follow, like, a certain number of pupils to get passed. I reckon sometimes, if they know they're not getting to the grade they've got to get to they do push you and we've got so much work that they push you too much [JP: yeah]. It's like all getting on top (MT: interview)

Because people are on their back as well. Other teachers are saying to them you've got to get the...you've got to get them to do the work. So, it all works out really (JP: interview)

'Cos it's bad on your CV, isn't it?

Cos it's [having 'lots' of jobs] bad on your CV, isn't it that you've had a lot of jobs and a lot of people are going to look at you and think he's obviously been sacked or he's not a good... what's the word [MT: worker, like he's not committed to the job] yeah. That's it. (JP: interview)

Interviewer: How many jobs do you think you might have before you retire?

MT: oh, I don't know! It could be varied depending on how I... how I feel in the job really, if I want to leave or not. Mmmm, I don't know, I'd say about... hopefully as less as possible really. I hope I enjoy my job so I don't have to leave in the first place but if that's the case I just want it to be as low as possible (MT: interview)

'You need to have a plan'

Unless you know what you're doing, I don't think there's no point really [in doing an HE qualification] (MT: interview)

Yeah, you need to have a plan of your life (JP: interview)

Pressure to get a job

Interviewer: is there any pressure on you to get a job?

JP: Yeah, there is a lot of pressure (interview)

'Cold knowledge'

...it's a good college and it's good for travel and tourism. That's what I heard about it through advertising and mainly in newspapers (JP: interview)

Interviewer: How did you hear about this particular college?

MT: Through school. They said, what would I like to do? I went to the careers advisors, and they said, what would you like to do and they gave me some options of which is the best colleges to go for to suit what you want to go into and so they came up with this college (MT: interview)

Financial constraints on HE

I wasn't looking to move further away [from home to do an HE course] and I'm not in, like, a... like a good position to be paying out all that money (MT: interview)

Cos, like, I don't wanna be travelling away from home or nothing like that. I want to stay somewhere close to home. Cos then you got, like, the living of costs and all that. That's why people get in debt (BL: interview)

Interviewer: So would you travel in or stay in Halls of Residence?

LD: No, I wouldn't have the money to do that and I need to stay at home with my Mum, couldn't leave her on her own (LD: interview)

Cos I was all up for it, now I'm thinking, is this what I want to do? Do I really want to get a loan to do this? I've got to be really sure. As my mum keeps saying to me, 'You can either go out and get a job or you can do that [i.e. HE] but you've got to be sure because we're the ones who are going to have to fund you'. They don't want to spend, well, get the loan, get the money, then I'm not really that sure (LH: interview)

I will yeah. I'll be having a part-time job [during studies for intended degree] cos I think we have to pay for uni as well. And then you've got to get a loan out and after you get a job you've got to pay that loan and stuff so I'd rather get a job in that time and see if I can pay the loan one by one while being at uni (SF: interview)

I'd rather come to this one [case study college] and it's near to home as well and I can't afford to go anywhere else, not far from home anyway cos it's expensive. (TM: interview)

'There was still someone if I like had problems'

It's just cos some of my friends were over the road and it was someone to come with in the morning and go home with like.... they went to the other building, so like it was just someone that I knew so I wouldn't be going into like although I was on my own in one aspect.... There was still someone If I like had problems, I still had someone [Yeah] there that I could go back to (AR: FG1)

But some of them [Open Days] were with my friends and that cos they were the ones that wanted to study as well so we all, like, went together to the Open Days (BM: interview)

'I'd have carried on anyway'

I still would have [continued with AVCE] but I don't think I would have wanted to come to college. I still would come, still would have done my course. Probably wouldn't have enjoyed it as much though. [] I wouldn't want to come and it would get to that stage where I probably would stop coming really. Because you can't really be alone, can you really? You'd just be bored. (LH: interview)

Yeah. I think if I didn't get along with anyone I'd have stayed on the course cos at the end of the day I'm doing education for myself really, not for anyone else (TM: interview)

If I didn't make good friends I would have stayed on but I would have tried to make good friends in other ways so... I would have tried. If I didn't even... cos the course is much more important. Friends, they will stay with you but obviously friends are not gonna get you a job, more likely. You have to get a job yourself so you have to do something (SF: interview)

I would have carried on with it just for the fact that I don't need friends to get me where I'm going cos there not the ones who's gonna be paying me my money (NP: interview)

Yeah I would have [continued with AVCE], I think I would have. I don't think I would have enjoyed it as much as I would have but I think I definitely would have carried on (MT: interview)

I don't know. Cos I did want to finish the course so I probably would have.... 'don't know... determined myself to finish it but it would have affected me if I didn't make any good friends cos I don't wanna come in and not, like, speak to no-one (MT: interview)

'I want to try and get out of education as soon as possible'

So now this has been like three years since I've been in education so it just puts you off sometimes. I just think I want to leave college, just want to go home and relax. But, at the

same time, you think, what's the point of leaving college, going home, if you've done so much and leave at the end, what's the point? You might as well finish it to the best. So, it's all about thinking, not just taking a decision. You gotta think. (SF: interview)

Cos I wanna try and get out of education as quick as possible (NP: interview)

I'm trying to get it all at once now that I'm at college so I don't have to come back. Like, once I come out at 22, stay out, stay in the working environment and that's it and just hope that I've got everything (NP: interview)

I'm looking to [study for a degree], I wanted to but I don't know, it's like another three years of study and that's a bit long (BM: interview)

Qualifications are valuable

I think they are very, very, very important (LD: FG1)

It all starts with school. If you haven't got your GCSEs at school you can't do your 'A' levels, if you haven't got your A levels you can't do your degree and so it [inaud] (LH: FG1)

I don't disagree with that but I'd still like my education cos it means a lot to me (LD) : FG1

'Most of it is just experience'

[No, no] No I don't think they [Qualifications] are in travel and tourism (LD: FG1)

...to be fair, anyone can go and be a rep, anyone can go and work in a bar, anyone can be a cabin crew go and [AR: Travel and Tourism is more experience] anyone can do anything in travel and tourism. (LD: FG1)

Yeah it's an experience industry rather than you need this this and this (AR: FG1)

I think it depends on what way you look at it cos there's obviously people like Richard Branson who never got the qualifications and he's still done a hell of a lot (AR: FG1)

But at the same time you could always, it sounds like, you don't want to work at the bottom but you can work your way up...and then still be in the same place where the people with qualifications come in, you would be at equal levels, do you know what I mean ? (LM: FG1)

Some jobs you have to start at the bottom even if you've got a qualification (LM: FG1)

Cos I always think like if you've moving on a managerial level and everyone else underneath you has been in the company for like what 4 years maybe 5 years....Because there's little things you just don't know about a company. They're going to know, they're going to be teaching you anyway at the end of the day even if you've got those qualifications (LDD: FG1)

The way I look at it as well is in say like the four years you spent in university you could spend that time working up and then later on errrm you may get preference over the person who has got the qualifications due to the fact that you've got.....four years more experience while they've like just sat in a classroom. [LM: cos what] It all depends what way you look at it to be honest. (AR: FG1)

Sometimes experience may be better but like people who are going to be like my dad never got any GCSEs and he's a bricklayer. Certain jobs you don't need qualifications, you really don't (LD: FG1)

...so much with like the travel and tourism industry most of it is just experience (LM: FG1)

I think more commitment to what you've done in college will probably help you more (DG: Yeah) like attendance and stuff like that and just, I don't know, general personality probably rather than what the qualification will (EL: FG2)

I think you can just work your way up in a lot of jobs [General agreement] (KC: FG2)

It's more skills than [General agreement] than what (DG: It's what you're like as a person) (? more experience as well) cos that's what most people go on now [General agreement] than the actual qualifications (EL: FG2)

Interviewer: Do you think if you didn't have a degree you could work your way up to the same position as someone with a degree?

[General agreement]

DG: It just takes longer

EL: And it depends on like how you are as a person. If that's what you wanna do then you'll do it but if you don't then you won't do it will you? (FG2)

Depends on what you're going for, like, if you wanna manage a hotel then it's good that you have it...but if you just like wanna work like air cabin crew or you wanted to do some kind of repping I don't think you really need it. It's more experience. (SH: FG3)

And I thought, well, it sounds really bad but if I like say I went into a call centre—it's not what I wanna do—but if say I went in there with two years' customer service behind me and someone just comes in with two years out of a degree, you'd rather have someone with experience wouldn't you really, within that industry, than someone with a degree who's got to be trained from scratch? And then I thought, well, experience is more than anything with the jobs that I want to do anyway. (LH: interview)

APPENDIX FIVE: STUDENT INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

School

- Explain more about not being pushed and bad teaching
- What grades did you think you'd get?
- What grades did the teachers think you'd get?
- Were they higher or lower than you thought?
- Did your teachers think you would go to college?
- Did you ever think of doing 'A' levels?

Friends at school

- Ever discuss school work or grades with friends?
- Ever discuss what you'd do after GCSEs with friends?
- You say you wanted a clean break from school, can you explain about that a little more?
- Where did your friends go after GCSEs?

16+ Study

- Did you ever think of leaving school at 16?
- What did your parents say to you going on to college?
- Did either of your parents go to college after school?
- Did they think that you would go to college?
- Have you got any brothers/sisters etc at college or uni?
- Do you know anyone who is or has been in HE?

Travel and Tourism

- Did you ever think of doing another subject?

[CASE STUDY COLLEGE]

- How did you hear about this college? ('someone' and 'the radio')

Friends at [CASE STUDY COLLEGE]

- Why do you think you get on so well on the course?
- If you hadn't made such good friends, do you think you would have carried on with the course?

Performance on the AVCE

- Do you discuss work or grades with your friends?
- How do you think you've done on the AVCE? You said you need to be pushed. Why is this?
- How do you think you've done compared to your friends?
- What have your lecturers said about your performance on the AVCE? Do they think you need to be pushed?

Part-time Job

- Have you got one?
- If you couldn't have a part-time job, would you carry on with the course?

The value of the AVCE

- How do you think this course compares to 'A' levels?
- If you wanted to leave college after this course, but you didn't want a job in travel and tourism, how useful do you think this course would be?
- If you wanted to go on to uni but you didn't want to do a degree in tourism, do you think the AVCE would be useful?

Higher Education

- You said that a lot of jobs in travel and tourism don't need qualifications, but you want to do a degree. Why?
- What do you think would be more useful, the knowledge you get from a degree or the qualification itself?
- Do you think you will be able to push yourself to study?
- Why do you think that LDD, LM and AR do not want to go on to HE?
- Why do you want to study at [CASE STUDY COLLEGE]?
- Would you consider/Have you considered going somewhere else?
- Would you think of doing an M.A?

Jobs

- Why do you think it is good to have lots of different jobs and get experience?
- What's the attraction of owning your own business?
- Why would you like to live and travel abroad?
- When do you think you might retire?

APPENDIX SIX: STUDENT INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT (INTERVIEW WITH 'LD' 13.04.05)

1 **Interviewer:** Hi, first question. In the focus group interview that you did you
2 mentioned that you didn't really get on all that well at school and you thought that
3 you weren't perhaps pushed hard enough. Could you maybe explain a little bit more
4 about that, your experiences at school?

5 **LD:** err, my experiences at school weren't very good, there was a lot of, I don't know,
6 bitchiness, I'd like to say, just between girls and things like that so I didn't enjoy
7 school at all, it wasn't a very nice time for me. The teachers didn't push you, like in
8 maths class if I didn't get something I asked for him to explain it and he said if I
9 didn't get it first time, tough luck basically, so they definitely didn't push me at all.

10 **Interviewer:** Right, right, and what grades did like the teachers think you'd get in
11 your GCSEs

12 **LD:** A to Cs.

13 **Inter** A to Cs yeah, and did they think you'd go onto college or?

14 **LD:** Yeah

15 **Inter:** They did.

16 **LD:** Yeah

17 **Inter:** Yeah, right. Did you talk about going to college with them or?

18 **LD:** Not particularly, I don't think they were really, I had like one careers meeting the
19 whole time I was there. That was it, I don't think they was really interested really,
20 they just wanted to get their grades up so it looked good on their stats or whatever, but
21 they weren't really interested no.

22 **Interviewer:** Ok, cos you said they didn't have a sixth form so you couldn't have
23 stayed there anyway.

24 **LD:** No they didn't have a sixth form no. You remember a lot don't you?

25 **Interviewer:** I do, I do, oh yes. And did you get the grades you thought you'd get at
26 school.

27 **LD:** I did yeah.

28 **Interviewer:** And when you were thinking about going onto college after your
29 GCSEs did you ever think of doing A Levels as opposed to this type of course or?

30 **LD:** I did but I thought I might as well do something that I enjoy and then if I want to
31 take it further if I can, it's not that, I could, I have faith in myself that I could have
32 passed A levels if I'd have chosen to do A levels, I just didn't want to, didn't appeal to
33 me. I wanted to pick a subject I was interested in.

34 **Interviewer:** Had you done travel and tourism at school at all?

35 **LD:** No, that wasn't offered, like some of friends they got to do it at school at a lower
36 level but we never had that opportunity.

37 **Interviewer:** Where did most of your, the people you know at school, where did they
38 go? Any idea?

39 **LD:** [Local college], [local college], yeah but that's the reason I didn't want to go
40 there cos everyone from school was going there and I wanted a fresh break and I got
41 one here cos I didn't know anyone here. That's exactly what I wanted.

42 **Interviewer:** Was there any point when you thought you might just leave school at 16
43 and get a job?

44 **LD:** No. I hated school but I knew college would be a completely different
45 atmosphere so no I definitely wanted to stay on.

46 **Interviewer:** Why was that?

47 **LD:** I want an education. I want to, I like to learn knew things, I want to learn as
 48 much as I can.

49 **Interviewer:** Did you discuss this with your parents?

50 **LD:** Yeah

51 **Interviewer:** And what did they say?

52 **LD:** They were happy for me. They really wanted...they would have stuck by me
 53 whatever I'd chosen but they was happy that I was staying on cos they know I can do
 54 it so they was happy for me and they were glad I was going somewhere that no-one
 55 from my school was going to cos they knew things that happened at school, so

56 **Interviewer:** Do you mind me asking, did either of your parents stop on at college
 57 after school or...?

58 **LD:** [inaud] their GCSEs (laughter) so no, they didn't. My mum went back a few
 59 years later and she's done courses and she went to uni but she had to leave in the end
 60 but she did go back and do college courses and things and then she used to teach
 61 people with learning difficulties and things like that. So she went back and did it later
 62 in life but my dad's a builder so he didn't really need any of that cos he had a trade.

63 **Interviewer:** Right, yeah. So, did he go straight into that from school?

64 **LD:** Yeah, he went...he started it when he was about fifteen. So, yeah, he's been
 65 doing it all his life.

66 **Interviewer:** Ok, what does your mum do now?

67 **LD:** She's a Residential Lettings Manager

68 **Interviewer:** Right, so she's not teaching anymore?

69 **LD:** No, she's not teaching anymore.

70 **Interviewer:** Right, have you got any brothers or sisters at college or uni?

71 **LD:** My sisters are a lot older than me. I've got one that's like seven years older than
 72 me and the other one's eleven years older than me. And (name of sister) stayed on,
 73 my oldest oldest, she stayed on for a while, she quit. (Name of other sister) changed
 74 courses twice and quit twice but she's gone back to night college now. She's training
 75 to be a teacher and hopefully is going on to uni next year. She's trying to make me do
 76 that but I don't want to teach (laughter) it's alright.

77 **Interviewer:** (laughter) I don't blame you! No, ok. And have you got any other
 78 relatives who have gone to college or uni?

79 **LD:** To be honest, I'm the first one, that's why I'm really determined to do it as well.
 80 I want to be the first one.

81 **Interviewer:** Yeah

82 **LD:** I'm the last hope of the family (laughter) I think!

83 **Interviewer:** Ok, right. Just asking you about how you heard about this college. I
 84 think in the group interview you mentioned someone had told you about it?

85 **LD:** Yeah, one of my friends from school told me about it, that she was going to, cos I
 86 was just planning on going to see like local co...well not, this is, was, local for me,
 87 like (local college) and, where else did I put down for? I think I just put down for
 88 (local college) and then this college. My friend told me about here. [inaud] cos it
 89 specialises in [inaud] it's got to be the best one really to do it.

90 **Interviewer:** Yeah. And did you come here, like, on an Open Day?

91 **LD:** Yeah, I come here on an Open Day. And I really liked it soon as I come here I
 92 liked it. It's got a nice atmosphere. It's clean, unlike (local college)!

93 **Interviewer:** Was that not very nice then?

94 **LD:** Oh God no! (Laughter) It's a really, really horrible college!

95 **Interviewer:** Was it? Cos that's something that's come across all the group
 96 interviews I've done. People have said, oh (local college)!

97 **LD:** No, it's like, I thought (local college) was bad but not that bad like. Like, we had
 98 our interviews in the cafeteria and things like that. And then when I come here it was
 99 completely different. It was great here, I love it.

100 **Interviewer:** Yeah, ok. And, one of the things that came across in the group interview
 101 was that you all get on very well, you're very close friends.

102 **LD:** Yeah, we're very close.

103 **Interviewer:** Yeah.

104 **LD:** That's nice cos I never had anything like that in school. People who weren't my
 105 friends, said they were my friends, weren't really my friends if you know what I
 106 mean. So it's really nice here that everyone's so close. I get on with them all.

107 **LD:** Why do you think you do get on so well?

108 **Interviewer:** I think it's cos everyone's a lot more grown up in college, it's not as
 109 bitchy I suppose and...I don't know (laughter)

110 **Interviewer:** You just get on well?

111 **LD:** Yeah, we do.

112 **Interviewer:** That's good, and do you, like, when you do the assignments and that, do
 113 you ever discuss the assignments or the grades that you've got with other people?

114 **LD:** Oh, we always discuss our grades, yeah (laughter). Yeah. We do. I mean we
 115 discuss like, if we're stuck on assignments, like if we can help each other out, things
 116 like that, then we do.

117 **Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah and how, I mean, you can tell me in confidence, how well
 118 do you think you are doing compared to say the other people in the group interview?
 119 How would you say you are doing?

120 **LD:** Top. Me and (other AVCE student) are on a par. We got the highest grades in the
 121 group last year, like, out of the whole AVCE, so...(laughter). I can confidently say
 122 I'm one of the top.

123 **Interviewer:** You're doing very well, yeah. Good, good. And do you think if you
 124 hadn't met such good friends, would you have carried on with the course?

125 **LD:** No, no cos I wouldn't have wanted it to be like school at all. I would have left if I
 126 hadn't have liked it. Definitely. I wouldn't want to go through college on my own
 127 (laughter).

128 **Interviewer:** Right. Something else that a few of you mentioned is that sometimes
 129 you feel you maybe need to be pushed a bit more by the lecturers here. Why do you
 130 think that is?

131 **LD:** Cos I've got assignments that are meant to be handed in, well (laughter), God,
 132 December 2004. And nothing's been said to me about it. No-one's pushed me to do it.
 133 I know it's really bad! (Laughter)

134 **Interviewer:** (Laughter) No, I'm not judging you! Right, so you feel they could sort
 135 of be on your back a bit more maybe?

136 **LD:** They should be on my back to be fair but like it is all getting done now. It's just,
 137 I've had a lot of family problems so it's been hard for me to get it done. But they
 138 don't know I've had family problems, so I could just be skiving and they're not doing
 139 anything about it. They do really need to push people.

140 **Interviewer:** Yeah. And you say that's generally, not just yourself?

141 **LD:** I think everybody.

142 **Interviewer:** What have your lecturers said to you about how well you've done on the
 143 course? Are they happy with you?

144 **LD:** They're really happy with me, yeah. Star pupil! (Laughter)

145 **Interviewer:** Well done!

146 **LD:** Yeah, I love the lecturers too, they're great. They make the college too. I know

147 they should push me but...as friends and things. I know they shouldn't be your

148 friends, they should be but not...(laughter) I know what I'm talking about!

149 **Interviewer:** I know, you should have a good relationship with them.

150 **LD:** Yeah, and I do with all of them.

151 **Interviewer:** Yeah, and that's important, isn't it? Right, do you mind me asking, do

152 you have a part-time job?

153 **LD:** No, no.

154 **Interviewer:** Would you ever consider having one, or is it...? Or is studying more

155 important?

156 **LD:** No, studying's more important but things that have gone on, like, at home with

157 me and my mum, I've got to get a job now. So, [inaud] I can't pay the mortgage,

158 great! (Laughter).

159 **Interviewer:** Right. Just looking at the AVCE that you've nearly finished, when

160 you're looking for jobs, how well do you think that would compare to someone that's

161 done 'A' levels?

162 **LD:** No, it's not going to compare at all. I don't think it is equivalent. I think

163 it's...two 'A' levels or something like that. Equivalent to so many 'A' levels but I

164 don't think, I think if I was there and someone was, and someone with 'A' levels was

165 there, people with the 'A' levels would get it.

166 **Interviewer:** Right, why's that?

167 **LD:** It just looks better doesn't it? Saying that you've got an 'A' level in, like, English

168 and Science and that, or you've got an AVCE in Travel and Tourism.

169 **Interviewer:** Is that cos of the subject, do you think?

170 **LD:** I just think it's the AVCE part, to be fair.

171 **Interviewer:** Yeah. The fact that it's vocational, you think?

172 **LD:** Yeah.

173 **Interviewer:** That kind of leads me on to the next question. If you wanted to leave the

174 college now—I mean, I know you're going to go on to HE—but if you wanted to

175 leave it now with the AVCE, but you didn't want to go into travel and tourism, you

176 wanted to do something else, how useful do you think the AVCE would be?

177 **LD:** Most of it is all about travel to be fair. The only thing that I think would be useful

178 outside of it would be the customer service that we did. Marketing, and English

179 Speaking Board. I think really, they're the only things that would be useful to me

180 outside of the travel industry. Yeah. I think they're the only ones that would be useful.

181 All the rest are like Tourism Development, all to do with tourism basically, so I don't

182 think they'd help me.

183 **Interviewer:** Right. And, let's have a look. Yeah, so you're going to go on to uni and

184 you're going to do Travel and Tourism?

185 **LD:** Tourism and Business Management

186 **Interviewer:** Yeah, TBM, Tourism and Business Management that's it. Let's imagine

187 you didn't want to do that. You, I don't know, you wanted to do English or something

188 like that, do you think the AVCE would help you to study another subject?

189 **LD:** Like English or something like that?

190 **Interviewer:** Yeah

191 **LD:** No

192 **Interviewer:** Or another vocational subject for example?

193 **LD:** To be honest, no. Not unless it's to do with Travel and Tourism, I don't think it

194 would.

195 **Interviewer:** So it's specifically designed for Travel and Tourism?

196 **LD:** Yeah

197 **Interviewer:** Ok. Right. Just looking at higher education then. So you're going on to

198 do the TBM. Something that some people said in the group was that for the travel and

199 tourism industry, they didn't think qualifications were that important. But you're

200 obviously going to go on to do a degree. What do you hope to get out of doing the

201 degree, if qualifications aren't maybe that important?

202 **LD:** I do think they are important. No-one can say that they're not important. If they

203 went for an interview and I went for the interview and I've got a degree then I'm

204 going to get chosen over them. Well, I think I would be [inaud]. They may say

205 that...what's the word? (Laughter). I can't think of what the word is now but they say

206 that experience is better. I say experience is important but I think that education is as

207 well. I do think that it's very important

208 **Interviewer:** Yeah. Ok, thanks. And what do you think would be more important

209 from the degree, the knowledge that you get from the studying or maybe the

210 qualification itself at the end of the day?

211 **LD:** I think a degree would look good from the knowledge I get from it and the fact

212 that on my CV it will say I've got a degree. And I think it just shows commitment that

213 I've stayed on from school, I've chose to go to college, I've chose to go to uni. It

214 shows commitment that I'm willing to work hard. I think that always looks good.

215 **Interviewer:** You said, I think, that you would like to have lots of different jobs, get

216 lots of different experience. What, why is that then?

217 **LD:** I just like to try everything. I don't [inaud] go into a job, like most people I know

218 hat their job. What's the point in you going to work for nearly the rest of your life

219 until you retire? I wanna do something that I enjoy. I don't want to be stuck in a job

220 and get up in the morning and think, oh God, I don't wanna go to work. I wanna do a

221 job that I will enjoy.

222 **Interviewer:** Ok. And you said that ultimately you'd like to own your own business?

223 What kind of business?

224 **LD:** It would be abroad, in, like, a hotel. Or a bar, something like that. Something that

225 I can call my own. Something that I've worked for and it's all mine. That's what I

226 want. People say you can't...people keep telling me you won't do it. I will do it. I've

227 got determination.

228 **Interviewer:** Who keeps saying that you won't do it?

229 **LD:** Just, like, friends and things like that. They say, oh you won't do that. My family

230 won't, my family support me. They say, if you work at it, you can do it. But there's

231 people who just laugh at me and it's like, yeah, as if! That just makes me more

232 determined to want to do it. People tell me I can't do it, someone tells me I can't do it,

233 it's like, uh, I will do it!

234 **Interviewer:** Like a red rag to a bull?

235 **LD:** Yes (laughter).

236 **Interviewer:** And do you know anybody who runs their own business?

237 **LD:** My dad used to but he give it up in the end. He says it's a lot of hard work. I

238 understand, I'm not gonna be sitting on my ass all day doing nothing. I understand it's

239 a lot of hard work but it'll be worth it, definitely.

240 **Interviewer:** Do you think you'll be able to push yourself to study for a degree, cos,

241 do you think the teachers will push you to study?

242 **LD:** To be fair, in uni I don't think that they will [inaud] will get pushed. I think in

243 uni it really is down to you. They will give you the work but you're going to have to

244 go away and you're going to have to do it and if you choose not to do it, that's your

245 fault at the end of the day. It's wasting your time, not their time. Well, that's the way I
 246 see it. It might be different when I get there but I don't think...obviously they'll push
 247 you to an extent but I don't think they'll push you [inaud] cos it's your choice.

248 **Interviewer:** Ok, right. Nearly at the end. So, you and LH were going to go on to HE
 249 weren't you and then I think the others, LDD, LM and AR were going to leave.

250 **LD:** LH is not going anymore.

251 **Interviewer:** Is she not?

252 **LD:** No. Well, she said the other day that she's not going anymore. She's changed her
 253 mind so it's just gonna be me.

254 **Interviewer:** Really? Cos she was quite certain that she was gonna go.

255 **LD:** I know, she's like, she doesn't wanna do it. She says it's not for me, I've
 256 decided. She says, you can have my place. I said, I don't wanna do your course
 257 anyway, I don't want your place! (Laughter).

258 **Interviewer:** Why do you think they don't want to go to university?

259 **LD:** Truthfully? Laziness. They haven't got the motivation. I know that's not a very
 260 nice thing to say but it's the truth. I think it's just laziness. They haven't got the
 261 motivation and determination. And, oh God, this is going to sound horrible, I don't
 262 think that they could do it. That sounds really horrible but from what I've seen of their
 263 grades, from what we talk about and from our exams, they keep on failing them. They
 264 keep on failing their coursework so I think uni would be too hard for them. I don't
 265 mean that nastily (Laughter)

266 **Interviewer:** No, I understand. It's completely confidential. Ok, just two more
 267 questions. Would you ever consider doing an M.A, a post-graduate course when you
 268 finish your degree?

269 **LD:** Could you explain what one of them is?

270 **Interviewer:** Oh, right. Well, your degree will be four years, won't it? And that gets
 271 you a first degree, a B.A degree. A post-graduate is a course when you finish your
 272 degree, usually we call them a Masters, M.A, and they last a year and they can be a
 273 useful qualification particularly for getting into things like management.

274 **LD:** Oh yeah. I'll definitely consider that then. Yeah. Yeah, I'll definitely consider
 275 doing one of them.

276 **Interviewer:** Oh right, that reminds me would you ever consider doing your course at
 277 another institution, another college? Cos you're going to do it here aren't you, at this
 278 college?

279 **LD:** To be honest I haven't even really thought about it. It just seems so much easier.
 280 I come here anyway. All I've got to do is walk across the car park and I'm at uni
 281 already. So, it's like, I haven't even considered any other universities cos I love all the
 282 teachers here and some of the teachers that have taught me will be teaching me as
 283 well over in...on that side.

284 **Interviewer:** Right, so you'd have the same...

285 **LD:** I'd have some of the same teachers...so I haven't even considered it.

286 **Interviewer:** No

287 **LD:** I wouldn't either. If I didn't get in here then I would [laughs] but, yeah...

288 **Interviewer:** So you'd live at home would you? You're quite close by when you're
 289 doing your degree?

290 **LD:** No, I'm not close by anymore. I was. I used to live, like, in Erdington in [Case
 291 Study College city] and then, at the end of December, I've moved up to Wilden. It's
 292 like, in the middle of nowhere basically. It's a little village in Worcester. That's where
 293 I live now but I wouldn't want to go to anywhere around there.. they're not very good.

294 **Interviewer:** So would you travel in or stay in Halls of Residence?

295 **LD:** No, I wouldn't have the money to do that and I need to stay at home with my
296 Mum, couldn't leave her on her own at the moment anyway.
297 **Interviewer:** Right, very last question then. When do you think you might retire?
298 **LD:** (Laughs) Ah well! When my business is doing good and I can, I can...I don't
299 know. I don't want to retire when I'm sixty-five. I wanna...if I've got my own
300 business then I'm definitely not working till I'm ancient. I want to retire as soon as I
301 can after I've...that's really lazy isn't it?
302 **Interviewer:** No, no. Not particularly! (Laughs)
303 **LD:** After I've done everything I've wanted to do and I've achieved everything in my
304 business that I want to achieve then [inaud] retire!
305 **Interviewer:** Ok, right. Thanks very much.
306 **LD:** Thank you.

APPENDIX SEVEN: STAFF INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Personal history / biography

1. How long have you been at this college?
2. What previous jobs have you had?
3. Could you tell me what your qualifications are?

Current workloads

1. What subjects do you teach?
2. At what level?
3. How many hours per week do you teach?

College ethos, purpose etc

1. What would you say is the overall purpose of this college? (i.e. who do we educate and for what purpose(s)?)

Course ethos / purpose

1. What part do you think this qualification plays in that purpose?

Categories

1. In your experience of teaching here, have you noticed any differences between: (a) male and female students? (b) ethnic groups? (**NB: This latter point would have to be dealt with very tactfully**)

Individual students (as 'carriers' of category characteristics)

1. Why do you think student X came here?
2. How have they done on the course? (in terms of motivation, attendance, performance etc)
3. What part of the course do you think they have enjoyed most?
4. Student X plans / does not plan to go on to do an HE course, why do you think this is?
5. What sort of job do you think they are aiming for?

AVCE in Travel and Tourism

1. What do you think the value of the AVCE is? (i.e., what do students learn from it? How do they benefit? Do you observe any differences between them as they were at the start of year 1 compared to how they are at the end of year 2?)
2. How useful do you think the AVCE is for getting a job in the travel and tourism industry?
3. How useful do you think it is for progression onto HE?

'Mopping up': any other matters arising

APPENDIX EIGHT: STAFF INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT (INTERVIEW WITH 'BL' 27.06.05)

1 AR Errm, could I just ask you how long have you been at this college?
2 BL Errm, I've been here for about 6 years now
3 AM Six years, right, ok and what jobs did you do previously to that?
4 BL I was a curriculum area manager previously at another college
5 AM Right, right, ok
6 BL Shall I say the areas?
7 AM Yeah please, yeah
8 BL Sport leisure and travel and beauty
9 AM At a local college was that?
10 BL It was yeah
11 AM Ok and before that?
12 BL Before that I was in the travel industry for over 20 years
13 AM And what sort of jobs did you do in the travel industry?
14 BL I worked for a tour operator, retail travel, I worked abroad
15 AM Yeah
16 BL Generally retail travel, senior management level
17 AM Yeah, yeah, ok And what errr academic qualifications have you got?
18 BL I've got a lot of life skills [laughter] Yeah err, I've got a Cert Ed, I've
19 got 'O' levels. I'm just still working on a BA in hospitality and tourism
20 management, whilst I'm here
21 AM That's here yeah?
22 BL Yeah
23 BL I've got lots of travel qualifications errm, I play the piano [laughter],
24 not an academic qualification but
25 AM Yeah yeah
26 BL Those are the sorts of things that I've got
27 AM That's fine, that's brilliant and errm, what subjects do you teach here at
28 the moment?
29 BL Travel and tourism
30 AM Yeah, to who? What level?
31 BL To mainly second year students
32 AM On the FE programmes?
33 BL On the FE programmes, yes
34 AM Yeah
35 BL Oh! I also teach on the community and business programmes to
36 community and business students and to higher education students as
37 well
38 AM And how many hours a week would you say that you teach on the
39 AVCE, or you did, used to teach on the AVCE?
40 BL Errm, on AVCE, probably about 8 hours a week
41 AM So, quite a bit of your timetable?
42 BL Yes, it's all the additional errm qualifications that I teach which is
43 things like Fares and Ticketing, Galileo, ermm, Retail Travel
44 Certificates plus a couple of core units off the main programme as well
45 AM So would you say you know the students quite well?
46 BL Very well, especially second years. I do a lot with the second year
47 AM Just looking at the college what would you say is the overall purpose of
48 this college?

49 BL To hopefully get students through the qualifications at a high level,
50 pass rates, to help them get into work. I see that as quite a big area for
51 me and I do help a lot of students get jobs in the industry and I also get
52 work experience and obviously to help them to get onto higher
53 education as well if that's the route they want to go down

54 AM And we talked about the college ethos, what do you say is the ethos of
55 this college?

56 BL I'd say it crosses a lot of areas, not only travel and tourism, you've got
57 the hospitality and catering, the beauty side, the management side,
58 languages. It covers a lot of areas ermm for those areas as well I think
59 it's quite obvious to people who come in they're going to the beauty
60 salons that we've got that we do beauty with cafes, restaurants ...and
61 that we do the hospitality and catering so the ethos I'd say is very good

62 AM And what's your view about AVCEs in general, not specifically the
63 travel and tourism one but general? Do you have much experience of
64 them?

65 BL Errm, I'm not one of the year managers because of my role which is
66 across a lot of different areas. I'm not specifically just AVCE or BTEC
67 National or whatever, ermm, I've forgotten what the question was I'm
68 sorry!

69 AM What do you think about AVCEs generally? How useful are they as a
70 qualification?

71 BL I think the industry get confused to be honest, about the qualifications
72 that the kids go to them with because they don't know, some of them
73 don't know what they are. I believe the students have found the AVCE
74 quite hard to achieve ermm, personally, I think the subject should be
75 more travelly and tourismy or more hospitality and catering, y,
76 whatever the area is. I think they need to be more practical, more
77 relative to the industry

78 AM Right, do you think they are...I don't know, too academic at the
79 moment?

80 BL I think so, yes, is my understanding generally of what people feel

81 AM And ermm, have you got any experience of I don't know what you
82 might call traditional 'A' levels, I don't know, History or English or
83 anything like that? Do you know how it compares with that?

84 BL No, no. Well, that's a...personally, I prefer students to take exams.
85 That's from my point of view, because I think the voca...the AVCE
86 type of units, some of them are perhaps portfolio and it's not
87 standardised in every single college. So, we might have a very, very
88 good student who deserves a distinction and there's another student in
89 another college that isn't as good as ours who got a distinction as well.
90 So, it's not standard

91 AM Is that cos of the criteria then?

92 BL Well people read the criteria differently. You know, my understanding
93 could be totally different from another person's reading of the same
94 thing in another college

95 AM Quite variable then?

96 BL It is, very variable

97 AM And ermm, how valuable do you think the AVCE is for getting a job in
98 travel and tourism?

99 BL Well it's the equivalent of two 'A' levels, errm, but as I'm from the
100 industry originally and somebody came to me with an AVCE, I know
101 that some people are still not familiar with what the qualifications are.
102 Once they start seeing the units that they've perhaps studied such as
103 travel geography, or marketing in travel and tourism, a breakdown,
104 they'd probably understand a little bit more. Errm but I think the
105 industry tend to go more for the main programme but also to look for
106 the extra qualifications, such as the Fares and Ticketing, the Galileo the
107 ABTACs, the things that they recognise, that they have to take
108 themselves.

109 AM Yeah, cos these are industry recognised qualifications?

110 BL Yeah, they are, whereas the industry doesn't really recognise AVCE or
111 BTEC National or City and Guilds cos it's not...you know...

112 AM Not part of the industry

113 BL No, no

114 AM Right, and ermm...

115 BL I think it's good for the students because they do learn a lot, you know,
116 even though they're not perhaps exam based, or... they do learn a lot.
117 They do learn a lot from us as well cos we are from the travel industry,
118 you know. So, what they come in with and what they go out with...

119 AM So how would you, obviously it's difficult to generalise, but what
120 difference would you say you see between students coming in at the
121 beginning of the first year and then leaving at the end of the second
122 year?

123 BL A huge difference, but I think that's not only the qualification. I think
124 the fact that they're starting to grow up, take more responsibility.
125 Errmm, they do work experience with us as well. I mean, I've managed
126 to get them abroad for the last two years on work experience which
127 helps them confidence-wise, it looks good on the CVs. It's massive,
128 you know, the difference is huge from when they first come in to when
129 they leave.

130 AM Right. One of the things that came out of the interviews was that they
131 enjoy the social life side of things here at college

132 BL I'm. always with them [laughter]. But I think the fact that we're very
133 approachable as well helps the students and they..they know that they
134 can come to us. Mmm, and we do go out with them, as I say, we take
135 them abroad, we take them in the UK as well on trips or we go out for
136 days. Or, you know, I organised a meal, for example, for thirty of
137 them a few weeks ago and we had a great night there. So, that's a good
138 thing because again, that helps them with the confidence, asking
139 questions, you know, approaching us, things like that.

140 AM Which they're going to need when they go into the industry?

141 BL Oh yeah. But..and they know that we've got the links as well with
142 industry so if they are confident, outgoing, they've got good grades,
143 done the extra qualifications then we will recommend them to industry
144 as well

145 AM So that's a positive thing for them as well?

146 BL Oh yeah, yeah

147 AM How useful would you say the AVCE is if someone wants to go on to
148 do a degree, or foundation degree?

149 BL Oh yeah, it's very useful cos it's recognised, you know, by higher
150 education institutions as a progression route. I think, ermm, most of the
151 courses or qualifications at the same level do come out with the
152 equivalent of three 'A' levels whereas the AVCE doesn't, it's only
153 classed as two 'A' levels. So a lot of other institutions do the AVCE
154 plus one 'A' level. You know, so that might be a bit of a downfall
155 really, but our students could make it up with other things like the short
156 courses, you know, so it's swings and roundabouts really.

157 AM Ok, and a lot of the people who wanted to do HE actually wanted to do
158 it at this college

159 BL They do, yes

160 AM Why do you reckon that is?

161 BL Cos it's cheaper for them to stay at home [laughter] number one.
162 Ermm, also I suppose it's the confidence thing. Some of them aren't
163 quite confident enough to break the apron string, if you like. I mean,
164 we do get a lot of HE students in the first year here who do come back
165 to us and ask for our support and...advice and then gradually we see
166 less and less of them in the second and third year. So that might be
167 another reason why they like to stay here...but I should think the major
168 factor is the cost cos they can still stay at home

169 AM Yeah, it's local

170 BL Yeah, it's local. Plus, they're familiar with the environment.

171 AM And, do students come to you asking for advice on industry or higher
172 education?

173 BL Oh, all the time, all the time. You know, as I say, the teaching part of it
174 is quite minor really. It's all the other bits that we get through, you
175 know. And we have been very successful. We've had quite a few
176 students work at the airport over the last three years because we've got
177 contacts, I'm not saying it's just because of that, you know, but we sort
178 of give them an aim and we'll email the person at the airport and tell
179 them to look out for this CV. And I do organise for a recruitment from
180 the industry to come into college during June of the second year and to
181 advise students to, errr, take CVs. And he actually works for
182 MidiConsort which is a company that works on behalf of all the travel
183 agents in the midlands. So we get quite a few jobs out of him as well.
184 [Interviewer: right, direct contacts] People who don't want to go on to
185 HE Ermm, another company I've just made links with employs
186 students abroad, for Majorca for the summer. Errr, so I'm getting
187 students out in Majorca as well before they start their HE study. Ermm,
188 so that's the sort of links [Interviewer: that they benefit from, yeah]

189 AM Brilliant, thanks. So, in your experience of teaching on the AVCE,
190 what—maybe it's difficult to generalise—but what kind of students do
191 you think we get on the AVCE programme?

192 BL I think we get a mixture. I think we get the outgoing students which are
193 the ones we need really to go into the travel industry cos it's very much
194 a sociable, you know, bubbly personalities, outgoing people that the
195 travel industry need and want. But we also get the quieter students, the
196 studious students, which there's nothing wrong with that but we've got
197 to try and bring them out, we usually succeed. I think the abilities are
198 mixed as well although when they come to interview they've all got

199 the same sort of grades, it's not obvious when they're studying.
200 Which...you know, it's amazing but that's the reality.
201 AM What are the average grades that you ask for?
202 BL Four 'C's. one or two of them have perhaps got three and they've done
203 a very good interview. We might be a bit low on numbers, I don't
204 know, so they'll push them over. One or two of them who we've
205 perhaps put in at a lower level, over the first few weeks you can see
206 they've got the skills and qualities to be able to cope. That's how we
207 tend to swap them over in the first few weeks which is a good thing.
208 It's...it's mixed, mixed students. Mixed abilities, mixed everything
209 really.
210 AM And you wouldn't notice any difference between male and female
211 students, or...?
212 BL We don't have many male students. In the second year we probably
213 always end up with three or four male students, you know, and the rest
214 are female. So...in the industry, you know, it's more female than male.
215 AM Yeah, so that just reflects what happens in the industry?
216 BL It does, yeah.
217 AM Why do you think it's so popular with females and not with males?
218 BL Because when we interview the students when they first come here and
219 you ask them what they want to do...well, ninety-eight percent of them
220 say they want to be air cabin crew or holiday reps and that's
221 predominantly female.
222 AM What about the lads, what do they say they want to do?
223 BL The same. Cabin crew, resort reps. We do the cabin crew course here
224 as well, and the resort reps course. So we do get some of them, not
225 many going on...I think we had one last year going on to air cabin
226 crew. That was a girl. Ermm, there's possibly one of this year's second
227 years, male, who will go on to be a holiday rep cos he's perfect for that
228 sort of job. Fingers crossed. I've got some of last year's students out
229 being holiday reps this summer for Thompson's and that's mixed
230 female and male. You know, so they do...it does happen.
231 AM In your experience, is it quite competitive to get a job in air cabin
232 crew?
233 BL Very. Yeah, you've got to be really good.
234 AM What are they looking for?
235 BL Well, they're looking for the obvious ones. Being a good
236 communicator, ermm, got to be articulate. English, Maths, Languages.
237 Ermm, the way you look. You know, I know they're not supposed to,
238 but they do. You know, you've got to be a certain size, a certain
239 weight. Ermm, outgoing, presentable, organised, flexible. They're
240 looking for everything really. You know, but a lot of people do go for
241 the jobs, you know nineteen year olds, nineteen plus.
242 AM Yeah, so I suppose a lot of them get disappointed do they?
243 BL They do. Yeah. But we do say that to them. You know, and you must
244 look at something to fall back on like looking at the airport or working
245 in a travel agency, get yourself into the industry some way and then the
246 doors start to open up, which they do.

247 AM Right. Just looking at the students you teach, how many of them do
 248 you reckon would be capable of going on to do a degree if they wanted
 249 to do one?

250 BL Ermm, I think we've got about forty-five students, second years, this
 251 year [pause] don't know, three-quarters of them, just. Some of them,
 252 definitely no. yeah, I'd say about seventy-five percent.

253 AM Right. That's quite a high figure then?

254 BL That's a guess cos I've got no idea really. But knowing them from
 255 what I know, cos I'm not their Year Manager, I don't know exactly
 256 what the grades are for everything cos it's something I don't need to
 257 know. No, but as I'm teaching them...personalities what they've
 258 achieved with me, I'd probably say about seventy-five percent of them.

259 AM Ok. Would you mind if I asked you about some individual students
 260 that you might know that I interviewed?

261 BL No. Not at all.

262 AM Ok, errr LDD Davies.

263 BL Yes.

264 AM What's your impressions of her?

265 BL Lovely. Very nice girl. Ermm, although she's not good at taking
 266 exams. Err, she panics terribly, she can do it but she's not very
 267 confident. Ermm, I can see her working in the travel industry and that. I
 268 mean at the moment she's working in Cyprus as a holiday rep as part
 269 of work experience which she's doing very well. So, errr, vocationally
 270 very, very good. Academically ermm [pause] I'm not a hundred per
 271 cent sure because she panics. She can do it but it's the confidence.

272 AM Yeah, because she doesn't actually want to do a degree she told me

273 BL Well that's probably why, there you go. Because she doesn't think she
 274 can do it, you know. But I can see her working in the travel industry.
 275 She's got the right qualities.

276 AM Personality, yeah.

277 BL Definitely

278 AM And, errr, let's have a look, SF?

279 BL Air cabin crew

280 AM Think so?

281 BL Definitely. Ermm, the lady that teaches air cabin crew here [name] she
 282 says she's just perfect for air cabin crew. Again, not too good on the
 283 exams side but she's got the personality, the skills and the qualities to
 284 achieve in that sort of area but she also looks the part and that's what
 285 comes across, very obvious to airlines

286 AM Yeah, she looks the part as you say

287 BL Oh, yeah she looks the part, yeah. And she's very polite, she speaks
 288 very nicely, she's very presentable. She's quite organised, I'd have
 289 said. You know, but again, not too hot on the old exam side [laughter]

290 AM Yeah. I mean, talking to her, she was telling me that she was thinking
 291 of doing a degree here in Retail Management.

292 BL Really? Mmmm

293 AM Do you think she'd be...that's her kind of thing?

294 BL I'm surprised. You know, but I know that she works in retail

295 AM She does, yeah

296 BL Yeah, so she's probably ok with, like, money handling, customer
 297 service and managing people but not too good at exams still though, so
 298 I don't know what's involved in retail management, so... lovely girl,
 299 you know, and very presentable. And, as I say, I could see her as air
 300 cabin crew. Definitely.

301 AM And, ermm, MTT ?

302 BL Oh, lovely. Very bright. Good at exams. Ermm, lovely, lovely boy.
 303 Ermm, I don't know what... I could see him as... he's just been away
 304 with us as well. He's worked at a theme park for the last three weeks in
 305 Portugal and he's very, very good with the customers. He's very good
 306 with his peers, you know, they all like him very very much. He's a
 307 people person, very gentle guy. Ermm, possibly HE, you know, yeah.
 308 AM He did say he wanted to go on to do HE, T.B.M I think he mentioned.

309 BL Yeah, I can see him succeeding in that.

310 AM Yeah, he said he wanted to run his own hotel eventually

311 BL Possibly. He's a lovely guy, a good all-rounder. You know, definitely a
 312 people person which is what you need to be in that industry, don't you?
 313 I don't know about managing people, but he's still very young, so... I
 314 guess that comes with age, doesn't it?

315 AM It's too early to say at the moment, isn't it?

316 BL Yeah, yeah

317 AM And, err, JP?

318 BL [Laughter] oh, JP. He's the one I can see as the resort rep. The male
 319 resort rep of the year. Very entertaining. His confidence has grown
 320 over the last six months. Ermm, he's just turned everything around.
 321 Ermm, at one time you couldn't see him finishing his AVCE, you
 322 know. But he's really... we've all encouraged him and supported him
 323 and he's turned it round. It's, it's paid off, you know. He's done the air
 324 cabin crew course as well and did very, very well on that. He's another
 325 people person but he's so funny and entertaining as well, so I could see
 326 him as a holiday rep. I can't see him going on to HE

327 AM No. He didn't want to

328 BL No, I can't see that. Oh, I've not done bad with predictions have I?

329 [Laughter]

330 AM Something that came across is that a lot of the students have got part-
 331 time jobs

332 BL Yeah. Shame isn't it? They have to though for the clothes, and going-
 333 out money. It's a shame really.

334 AM Do you think, like, generally they're able to balance the two?

335 BL Generally, yeah. I mean we do have one or two where we have to have
 336 words with them saying, you know, you must prioritize, what's your
 337 priority, work or your job? You know, and they cut down on the hours
 338 and we have had some students previously who've had to leave
 339 because they couldn't manage it and they couldn't afford not to work,
 340 so, you know, it's a shame. But, again, you've just got to do the best
 341 you can with them because they've got to work some of them cos
 342 they've just got no income whatsoever and they aren't supported by
 343 parents cos the parents can't afford it.

344 AM And do you think they learn anything from doing part-time jobs that
 345 benefits them at all?

346 BL I would hope so cos it's...a lot of them work with customers which
347 would benefit them, you know, if they're going into the travel and
348 tourism industry. That's some skills that they could transfer and again
349 the cash handling, managing the time, time management. I think
350 there's a lot of transferable skills. They probably don't realise when
351 they're working and doing a course but eventually they will realise
352 what they have learnt and what they can transfer.

353 AM Right. Do you think there's any part of the course that students enjoy
354 more than other parts or does it depend?

355 BL I think it depends a lot...cos it's the first time we've done the air cabin
356 crew extra course this year and they've all said how brilliant that is.
357 They've all...and they, ermm, the retention and achievement on that
358 course is very high which shows that the students have enjoyed it. And
359 they've all fed back to me, cos obviously I've asked them, how's it
360 going and...cos it's one of the ones that comes under my remit and,
361 err, they've all said how brilliant it is. I think it's cos it's more practical
362 as well rather than sitting in a classroom writing notes. You know, so,
363 yeah I think that's one of the better ones.

364 AM Ok, err this is the last question. What kind of jobs do, err I mean I think
365 you said to a certain extent, what kind of jobs do they go into once they
366 leave this course?

367 BL We have quite a few who go into the airport now as ground handlers,
368 so that's like checking people in, collecting their boarding passes at the
369 gate, perhaps doing some ticket issuing, err, that sort of thing, customer
370 service contact. Errm, some of them go and work in retail travel. Errm
371 we've got a few girls from last year out in the city centre. Errm, we've
372 got about five of them at the moment working in Majorca as holiday
373 reps from last year, last year's second years. Errm, I don't think we've
374 got so many going into business travel. So, it's more airport ground
375 handling, err, resort reps and travel agencies mainly. You know, I think
376 we had one who went onto airline cabin crew last year. And that's
377 about it really.

378 AM Right. And is there anything about the AVCE that I haven't asked you
379 about that you've got opinions on?

380 BL No, not other than what I've said is that it's not standard across
381 colleges so people's interpretations could be different and I don't think
382 it's fair then cos one might have a brighter student than another but it
383 doesn't come out in the result whereas if it were an exam...I know that
384 there are the odd units that are exam based but generally it's more
385 assignments and everybody doesn't have the same assignments and
386 marking criteria and so it's very varied.

387 AM Ok, thanks a lot

388 BL Ok

APPENDIX NINE: MASTER LIST OF THEMES FROM INDIVIDUAL STAFF INTERVIEWS

Practical People

‘They want to be doing things’

I think it's cos it's [Air Cabin Crew course] more practical as well rather than sitting in a classroom writing notes. You know, so, yeah I think that's one of the better ones. (BL)

But from a personal point of view they did like the two practical subjects which were the 'live' project and the resort rep one because they're actually getting involved with something and it sort of actually brought out a lot of their characters as well, you know. You could see that they...that...sitting in a classroom normally teaching them, when they get involved they're sort of a different person altogether (AE)

I think a lot of the students like practical things, really, more than anything. They like to get involved (AE)

They're not, you know, the true academics that they can sit there and they can be talked at, you know, time and time again, and just write this down, write this down. That isn't what they're like. They want to be doing things, so, you know, showing them videos, you know, giving them questions. We do lots of quizzes over here. [] Like a pub quiz in relation to their subjects. (AM)

It's like a lot of students, I mean, those who don't perform particularly well academically, often are much better, sort of, doing practical things or even working for that matter. (SW)

‘A lot of the stuff they actually end up doing is quite academic’

The courses that we're offering, the travel and tourism courses that we do offer are supposed to be highly vocational. Err, I tend to disagree with that cos I find that a lot of the stuff that they actually end up doing is quite academic and it's not...err, we try to sell them as vocational courses but I think we come unstuck later on because it's quite a lot of academic work which is actually involved in them and that's where the students find it difficult. (SW)

I think the subject should be more travelly and tourismy or more hospitality and catering, whatever the area is. I think they need to be more practical, more relative to the industry (BL)

‘The students have found the AVCE quite hard to achieve’

I believe the students have found the AVCE quite hard to achieve (BL)

It was quite hard really, to get people up the higher level. The year I ran it, the highest score we got was a B-C Double Award (AE)

I get the impression they just get through the classroom really, classroom subjects. (JF)

I don't think the exams were ever really popular with students. (JF)

I do feel some of the subjects were a bit difficult. I taught one the year before called Tourism Development which was really quite sophisticated, errm, and the students had to do an exam in it and I felt that it was possibly stuff you would do on a first year HND. (SW)

Employability

'They seemed to like the additionality'

Errm but I think the industry tend to go more for the main programme but also to look for the extra qualifications, such as the Fares and Ticketing, the Galileo the ABTACs, the things that they recognise, that they have to take themselves. (BL)

They seemed to like the additionality that went alongside the AVCE, they seemed to like that (AE)

Some companies do like you to have some of the technical subjects as well as an AVCE. So, for example, if they've studied a Fares and Ticketing qualification or they've done a Galileo course or an ABTAC programme it will go in favour (AE)

[Students' favourite parts of the AVCE] Probably the extra-curricular activities like resort reps [inaud] the overseas placement if they manage to get on to it. (JF)

Erm, for employment I think it is also useful, you know, especially the enrichment courses that they do (AN)

...but also they have the added advantage, our students, because we offer the supplementary courses such as Air Fares and Ticketing, Galileo, Welcome Host, Health and Safety and all that sort of stuff, I mean, that's all extra. But it's still worth its weight in gold on a CV for a student, so it adds weight to their AVCE certificate. (JH)

They loved the resort rep, really enjoyed that. Because...we actually made them do a Welcome Meeting in front of everybody else and they could do whatever they wanted to do. Some of them put a dance together, some of them put a little sketch together. (AM)

They get opportunities to do things like the Leonardo Project, ermm, extra courses like the Cabin Crew and the cruise ship courses and things so there are a lot of doors that are open to them once they're on the course which are useful. (SH)

They've done ESB, they've done other short courses as well so they've got a lot more going for them. It's like, today we did First Aid training. So, it's a whole package together for the students that we offer [] That's again, you know, that's another bonus for us, for FE, that we give a lot more to our students (BM)

'They got really good experience there, you know, real world experience'

I mean, I've managed to get them abroad for the last two years on work experience which helps them confidence-wise, it looks good on the CVs. (BL)

I mean at the moment she's working in Cyprus as a holiday rep as part of work experience which she's doing very well. (BL)

Also, you know they get experience on trips in year two. This year they went to Portugal. Last year I went with the students to Cyprus and they got really good experience there, you know, real world experience dealing with customers which improves their communication skills, you know. (AN)

Well, I mean, a lot of their opportunities are opened up for them, err, things like work placements that we've done this year. They're not compulsory but it's something that the college offers as a sort of extra thing for them. (SH)

'We have an awful lot of contacts'

But..and they know that we've got the links as well with industry so if they are confident, outgoing, they've got good grades, done the extra qualifications then we will recommend them to industry as well (BL)

Having their qualification helps them in their application toward a job in the travel and tourism industry because we have an awful lot of contacts within travel and tourism because we have such a good reputation. (JH)

...lots of the lecturers are from industry. They have a real solid background and then they've perhaps moved into teaching or whatever, ermm, so they're bringing lots of industrial experience and they have lots of links (BM)

And really what better can they offer than getting a good education and having some experience at the same time?

...a lot of them work with customers which would benefit them, you know, if they're going into the travel and tourism industry. That's some skills that they could transfer and again the cash handling, managing the time, time management. I think there's a lot of transferable skills. (BL)

Well, yes so far as customer service is concerned. It's essential, you know, the fact that they're combining the practical and the theory, practical at work and theory in the college, you know, it acts as a catalyst for them, doesn't it? It also looks good on their CV, the fact that not only have they completed a college course and passed, they were

working as well. That's what employers love to see. You know, time management, that's what they're looking at and we've told them that (JH)

Well, yeah. Customer service, working in the real world, knowing that you have to show up on time, you have to be smart, you know, you can't toddle off when you think you want to toddle off. They get a lot more disciplined when they get a job. They are a lot more disciplined because they realise that life's not quite as sweet as they think it is. (AM)

Well, yeah, I would say...I mean the customer service would be good and that's what people want out there in jobs don't they? They want people who've got experience. Errm I think it can help when they've got to investigate organisations, errm, I think health and safety, all sort of things yeah I would say so. (SW)

And really, what better can they offer than getting a good education and having some experience at the same time? Especially, the sort of industry they want to go into, they want customer service. So, I think the kids are, if they can get out there and get jobs, good look to them. (BM)

The call of duty (and beyond)

'I become their mother'

But I think the fact that we're very approachable as well helps the students and they..they know that they can come to us. (BL)

But also having sort of a...sympathetic, empathetic approach to every type of student you...that you have come in, adapting to whatever ability they are and, ermm, being there for them really [Purpose of case study college] (AE)

They're quite comfortable to come and ask you as well (AE)

A lot of them have said that they like the environment here. They know a lot of the lecturers thinking that sometimes we're going to be teaching them again but it doesn't always work like that. It's that comfortability thing, I think (AE)

I think also they enjoy the, you know, the support they get from the tutors. (JF)

They do, yes [enjoy support from tutors]. I think perhaps they have the perception that when they go into higher education that level of support will continue. (JF)

They're lovely students. I've formed excellent relations with them. I think I can say there's not one student I did not get on with. In fact, I think probably over the four years they are the best students I've worked with. (AN)

Also, I think it's got a lot to do with the staff because the staff do look after them. (JH)

Their mother, I become their mother. But I tell them that at induction I am your mom for the next...and they take that literally I have to say. So, it, they will come and tell you everything you know if they've got a problem with their boyfriend or their girlfriend, or there's a problem at home or, you know, they haven't got this much money or they've lost their job or, you get everything and being a lecturer and especially, you know, being a year manager, you're a counsellor. (AM)

I mean certainly the Travel team are a very close team and I think as a teaching team as well they build a very strong relationship with their students. So, they feel that they've made a bond with the tutors and I think ultimately they feel that's the same bond with the college as well. (SH)

And...it's probably just the support they get at the college I would have thought would be quite significant. And they feel quite comfortable, it's quite a relaxed place, isn't it? It's not really...it's not pretentious or anything like that. (SW)

They've sort of hooked on to you, come to you with their problems, you know where they are academically (BM)

'...expecting someone else to help you all the time...'

...no, it's that lack of being assertive and the lack of helping yourself if you're expecting someone else to help you all the time and you're going to show me how to do this, you need to show me how to do that. But having said that, there's a lot of other students who are quite like that as well, aren't there? Who expect somebody else to do all the work for them and I think that's why in a large university or a large college they're going to struggle (SW)

Also, I think it's got a lot to do with the staff because the staff do look after them. However, they've got a short, sharp shock coming to them in HE cos they won't get that sort of support [] Cos it's not the same in HE you are left to your own devices which is a good thing and, you know, we will sort of try and help them but we say, you know, you've got to learn to do this yourself now. This is your education, you've got to go away and do your own research. (JH)

Lacking Confidence

'It's self-esteem'

His confidence has grown over the last six months. Ermm, he's just turned everything around. Ermm, at one time you couldn't see him finishing his AVCE, you know. But he's really...we've all encouraged him and supported him and he's turned it round. (BL)

It's self-esteem. Not self-esteem in the way she is for instance, in her academic ability. Which is across the board really. I'd say seventy percent of all students. (JH)

'Better the devil you know'

Erm, also I suppose it's [leaving home to do an HE course] the confidence thing. Some of them aren't quite confident enough to break the apron string, if you like. (BL)

But I think for the majority of them they really enjoy college. Err, they really want to learn and they've had so much support that they don't want to let go. It's...as the old saying goes, better the devil you know than the devil you don't. (JH)

. I know we've had a couple who've gone up to Preston and have done one year, don't like it and have phoned us and said, can we transfer? And we've put them in contact and they've transferred and they've come back here cos they feel safe and they like the environment. (AM)

I've known students that used to do the old BTEC...and I remember it, she went off to Preston University and came back two years later and the reason why she came back, she said, she came back to transfer to the college was because she needed, she'd get the help and support she needed to get her through her degree. I'm not quite sure if that's a good thing or a bad thing. (SW)

I think perhaps they [students] feel safe here (JF)

...you know, I've had a couple of students that went to Preston, or whatever, they did one year then came back here and have gone across the road and they still come and see me. So it's that security blanket really that, you know, the majority of them do actually stay on and go there (BM)

I think some of them are still not quite...they're young adults, I know, but still not quite mature enough to take that, sort of, step and we've had one or two, I have to say, who've done that and come back. You know, they've gone and wanted to come back and finish off a second year or third year here cos they haven't liked it at all. And I think it's change, some of them are a bit afraid of change. (AE)

'It's like there's still a little bit of a tie'

I mean, we do get a lot of HE students in the first year here who do come back to us and ask for our support and...advice and then gradually we see less and less of them in the second and third year. (BL)

We know that cos students from last year and the year before who've gone over come over and ask us for help now. Cos it's not the same in HE you are left to your own devices which is a good thing and, you know, we will sort of try and help them but we say, you know, you've got to learn to do this yourself now. This is your education, you've got to go away and do your own research. (JH)

And it's the familiarity isn't it? They like to see familiar faces, you know, there's a lot of students that come on to the HE course from the year before that always pop into the staffroom and, sort of, [gestures a wave] hi! And, you know, see their favourite tutors, it's like there's still a little bit of a tie. (SH)

...whenever I go over to [FE site of case study college] I see students from maybe the first year, FdAs and they're over there asking people for help cos they know they'll tell them what to do whereas if they went to, I don't know, a workshop down in [HE site of case study college] then they'd say go and look up, go and have a read of this book, go and do this and, you know, how about this? and get them to do the thinking cos a lot of students want it all on a plate don't they? (SW)

It's funny really cos we have a lot of ex-FE students who come from [HE site of case study college] to see us quite often and still ask for help which is nice (AE)

Means and Ends

'Retention and Achievement'

The retention and achievement on that course is very high which shows that the students have enjoyed it. (BL)

...but in terms of achievement at the end, you certainly had to push the students to get them through it, you know, and fortunately the actual achievement and retention...well the achievement also has been very good (AE)

I think historically we have tended to suffer with retention in the early part of the course but once that's over with...once you get to the second year the students do generally stay the course...and achieve. This year it has been one hundred percent achievement. [] some of them have gone for a Single Award, which you can do, others, the majority actually, have got a Double Award (JF)

Our primary concern is to make sure they reach their end goal which is to achieve and to be qualified in whatever they choose to come and study here and be as successful as they can be from an educational perspective. (JH)

But the purpose of the college is to help the students achieve, to actually get their achievement. I have to say on the AVCE, last year's, not this year's cohort but the cohort that we brought through, we had a 98% pass rate. So, they did really well. Really successful. (AM)

I mean, Key Skills has never been really popular with the students but we have a ninety-five percent pass rate for the I.T portfolio and the exam at level two also. It's actually very low for Application of Number and I also know that the students found level three Communication very hard. (AN)

I'm a firm believer that if they come into a lesson they should enjoy it cos they're not going to remember it if they're bored to tears. [] They remember at the end of the day and they pass so I don't mind making a fool of myself so long as they get through. And it does, it breaks barriers you know. The more approachable you are the more likely they are to come and see you. (AM)

‘You have a bit of flexibility with some of the units’

And I think that we were being quite careful when we chose which subjects students should do and therefore if we’d seen any which were really sort of woolly or impossible then we decided not to choose those ones. [] It was the optional ones. They tend to be the ones that are usually quite...the really, really woolly ones which are the ones you, sort of, need to look at and work out. (SW)

But the marking criteria for the BTEC is so prescriptive that very few of the students pass any assignment first time round. Whereas with the AVCE there was some leverage and leniency in how you could mark. There’s none in the BTEC. (JH)

Yes...What I like about the AVCE as well is it works on a points system so you have a bit of flexibility with some of the units. You don’t necessarily have to pass every unit. You can make up some points in exams, for example (JF)

And it’s [the transition from AVCE to BTEC] difficult in terms of if a student’s failed for picking up any different units. They can’t re-sit anything else cos obviously if it’s coming to a close there’s just no optional route for them to re-do anything. (BM)

The actual workload, if you like, or the criteria is not as heavy as on the BTEC and you could actually bring in some nice sort of practical elements with the AVCE. Ermm, and you could probably get through on, say, two assessments. (AE)

‘We tell them what they need, how many points they need’

Ermm, we tell them what they need, how many points they need, what they need to be getting at, you know, looking at what and once you’ve told them that. [] and what points they needed we could tell them you’ve got to be working towards a 9, working towards a 15 so they sort of knew what they had to achieve if they wanted to go onto uni. (AM)

But, I think overall, I mean they can gather their points up, their UCAS points up as they go along. They can keep a handle on how many points they’re incurring so they can get into university (SH)

‘So, in a sense, it’s a market’

... I mean, I’ve had this conversation actually. I’ve had it with [Senior Manager]not long ago, that I think HE here leave it too late to come into us, you know, cos they won’t come in now till, what? November of year two? They need to be coming in in May at the end of the first year, May or June, and start talking to them cos a lot of them have already started looking at it and picking up UCAS application forms and all the rest of it. [] They’re going to Sheffield Hallam, they’re going to Manchester, they’re going to Bristol. We come in as a last cos no-one here’s ever said anything. (AM)

It [provision of additional courses] is a selling point for us and when we sort of promote the college at Open Days we say those sort of things really. It really sells it cos they're getting a lot more, you know, than just the basic qualification that lots of other colleges do and I think that, you know, brings the students in and impresses the parents and again it's adding to that word of mouth, isn't it, promoting the college. (BM)

I think, ermm, most of the courses or qualifications at the same level do come out with the equivalent of three 'A' levels whereas the AVCE doesn't, it's only classed as two 'A' levels. So a lot of other institutions do the AVCE plus one 'A' level. You know, so that might be a bit of a downfall really, but our students could make it up with other things like the short courses, you know, so it's swings and roundabouts really. (BL)

Another reason is that BTEC Nationals...the subjects...there are a lot more industry subjects, if you like, in a sense, which colleges are probably better equipped to deliver than schools. So, in a sense, it's a market. We think we've got that sector of the market whereas if we were doing GCE, you know Leisure and Tourism, we'd be competing with schools which are better equipped. In terms of market share, post-16, you know, we're in a strong position to deliver that [inaud] So, that's another reason to, you know, that's your...catchment. (JF)

Audit and Flux

'There's an incredible amount of paperwork'

There's an incredible amount of paperwork to fill in and enter them in for exams and all that. So, in terms of paperwork it's just been a real nightmare over the last two years. (BM)

Cos there's a lot more paperwork than we used to have to do before and more forms to fill in, lots more administration [] Yeah, but we definitely spend more time doing administration work at college and there's very little time to do any preparation. I do most of my marking at home, I write most of my decent lectures, I write them at home. You just get interrupted all the time otherwise. (SW)

'...getting your head round it and once you do, it changes again'

...but it's, you know, when you start a new course, the assessment criteria you're not au fait with really and there's lots of things that come back and forth, back and forth. It puts students off. So, if you're going to introduce a new unit, I think the staff need to given a bit more time. It's no good just telling them in July it's coming in September. Cos we don't have enough time to read and, you know, sort assessments out. That's what the problem is in the first year. (AM)

I feel really sorry more than anything that we as a college continue to change things and keep on going towards different qualifications and maybe it undermines what

students have done in the past but it also undermines a lot of the work that we've done and I think that's creating more work for us in the long term (SW)

Also, the National has only recently been introduced, I think in 2002, so it's got quite a good few years left whereas I know the AVCE was up for overhaul anyway. So, had we run it for another year we would have to change it (JF)

...it's been really a trial. It's been really difficult for staff as well cos they're marking AVCE in a different way, marking BTEC in a different way, just getting your head round it all and once you do it sort of changes again really. (BM)

So, there's been quite a bit of change in terms of courses, ermm, and actual structures of courses as well, a big difference between them. So, the workload has developed, if you like but, ermm, very different from one another, you know, the actual structures of the programmes are quite different. (AE)

Body Work

'Travel and Tourism is predominantly female'

So...in the industry, you know, it's more female than male. (BL)

It's the type of industry really. It's very female-dominated, it always has been (AE)

I think maybe there are more females that think they might want to work in, you know, cabin crew, airport services, retail travel than perhaps males. (JF)

I suppose it's because of the later occupations they will get, like, cabin crew and travel agencies which are mostly female. Errmm, I mean, boys don't find it that attractive to be cabin crew. (AN)

Cos travel and tourism is predominantly female really. You know, when you see the reps and the cabin crews it's nearly always females. I mean there are males there obviously but it's females that they put forward. If you go to a travel agent it's not very often you'll see a man (AM)

'They come with dreams of being Air Hostesses'

Because when we interview the students when they first come here and you ask them what they want to do...well, ninety-eight percent of them say they want to be air cabin crew or holiday reps and that's predominantly female. (BL)

Everyone that come onto these programmes, they either want to be Cabin Crew, resort reps or whatever (AE)

Certainly, I think perhaps the holiday rep persona appeals more to girls. (JF)

Cos when they come in, you know, if they don't want to be a rep they want to be cabin crew and they don't think of anything else. (AM)

Ermm, it's possibly, and it sounds very stereotypical, but they come with dreams of being air hostesses and things which I think is predominantly all, or has historically been, a very female vocation. (SH)

Err, aspirations to be air cabin crew, holiday representatives, work at the airport. These are usually the ones. (SW)

They want to be holiday reps and they want to be air hostesses...well, not air hostess, cabin crew it's called now. But that sort of nature of work, working in airports etcetera. (BM)

'I think it's the whole glamorous thing really'

I think it's the whole glamorous thing again really. The fact that, you know...I mean, lads are different aren't they? Yes they like to look smart and that but the girls seem to see it as a...like a kind of a showpiece if you like. You know, you have to have your hair a certain way, you have to have your make-up a certain way, you have to dress certain ways. [] You're very much on show, very much outgoing and women like that, they seem to like that sort of feel, if you like. (AE)

[Qualities desired in a flight attendant] Ermm, the way you look. You know, I know they're not supposed to, but they do. You know, you've got to be a certain size, a certain weight. Ermm, outgoing, presentable, organised, flexible. They're looking for everything really. You know, but a lot of people do go for the jobs, you know nineteen year olds, nineteen plus. (BL)

she's [student 'SF'] got beautiful mannerisms about her. She speaks beautifully, is very well presented. Very polite. So, she'd do...I mean she'd be an excellent cabin crew or airport. (AM)

'SF' wants to be an air cabin crew as far as I remember, she'd be fine at that as well. I think she's quite assertive, well presented, she's mature. (SW)

The Managed Heart

'They need to be quite an outgoing and lively personality'

I think we get the outgoing students which are the ones we need really to go into the travel industry cos it's very much a sociable, you know, bubbly personalities, outgoing people that the travel industry need and want. (BL)

But it's also their personal skills as well that they develop which, you know, we mustn't overlook. (JF)

It's [socialising] very important. It's fundamentally important. If they're going to work in Travel and Tourism they've got to be able to communicate and talk to people about nothing and everything. So, the fact that they're sociable is a fantastic, errr...advantage to them. (JH)

And, you know, Travel and Tourism people are predominantly quite outgoing because of the industry that they're looking to go into. (AM)

Because it's very much customer facing and customer focused, they need to be quite an outgoing and lively personality. I think also they need to be able to be quite independent because certainly a lot of the rep type jobs will be out there and they would have to make decisions for groups and things like that so they need to be quite strong characters I think. (SH)

'Teamwork'

...but I found she was very supportive over him and in a large class, I mean particularly for me to teach people such as that, is knowing that MB was sitting next to him was really a good thing cos you know she could generate ideas and help other students around him so I think MTT benefited from that (SW)

They get to develop their soft skills like their teamworking, you know, they plan events and days out and trips and excursions, that sort of thing so they develop the, sort of, softer skills (SH)

Yes, I think it is [valuable as a stepping stone to HE] in terms of marking and grading and in terms of time schedules, working with teams, all those sort of social skills as well. (BM)

You've got some students that will really, really excel and pull everybody with them to get them there and you get others who will perhaps look after themselves and just try and, you know, do the best that they can for themselves whilst trying to help the others (AE)

'We've got to try and bring them out, we usually succeed'

I organised a meal, for example, for thirty of them a few weeks ago and we had a great night there. So, that's a good thing because again, that helps them with the confidence, asking questions, you know, approaching us, things like that. (BL)

But we also get the quieter students, the studious students, which there's nothing wrong with that but we've got to try and bring them out, we usually succeed. (BL)

Cos she lacks confidence in her own ability cos I told her off about that. I said, you know, don't ever doubt yourself. If you're gonna go around saying I can't do this for the rest of your life, what are you gonna do, you're just not gonna apply for jobs? I said, you know, that's no way to go about living your life. I said, you will build up

your own self-esteem as you get older. Because, you know, we all have knocks and we all have falls and we all make mistakes, that's how we learn (JH)

[Staff/student trips] For a bonding, as a bonding exercise, you know, they really do come out themselves and they make friends...and it's better cos they all help each other and it's...there's none of that, I'm not talking to her, I'm not talking to him. [] But that's because they're Travel and Tourism. (AM)

Ermm, a lot of them do go out and socialise, I know [lecturer] organises quite a lot of events where she'll go along with them and they'll go out. (SH)

I suppose we did have quite a lot of outings, I mean we took them to places and...I took them to Weston Super Mare, that was the year before, they liked that, they really liked that all the AVCE students. (SW)

I mean, some students come to the college and they don't have a lot of confidence and maybe they haven't done particularly well in their GCSEs but you know by the end of it they come out with a good qualification those are the ones who do well in Higher Education and do well in the future as well. Why not? (SW)

Well, the AVCE Travel and Tourism is a course that will equip the students to, well, you know, be that much more employable in the industry from the age of 18 as opposed to 16, so, you know, having gained an AVCE and one or two extra qualifications, the students are better prepared for the industry. They get a lot more, sort of, self-esteem and confidence. So, in that respect, that's where we contribute. (JF)

'The male feels he's got to either be a bigger voice or...he shrinks down'

I think possibly...I was going to say the females are more confident but that might just be because they're greater in number. So the male almost has to...it's sort of reverse roles almost, isn't it, but the male feels he's got to either be a bigger voice or a stronger voice or he just sort of shrinks down a little bit. (SH)

Ermm, cos most of the lads who do join are extroverts amazingly. If you're a lad doing a T and T course, they're usually extroverts cos I think they feel they have to be because they're surrounded by so many girls. (JH)

Again, I think it's a confidence thing. Cos there's not many chaps on the course, err, either they get really pampered and a lot of attention or, you know, they're sort of quiet and perhaps might feel a bit uncomfortable. (BM)

Some of the lads in the past have been very quiet compared to the girls and they've come out of themselves and they've excelled and we've seen a big difference with them. (AE)

Student Social Lives

‘The fact that they’re sociable is a fantastic advantage to them’

I think what they [students] enjoy the most basically is the relationships they have with their peers, you know, the social life and the [inaud] trips. (JF)

Some students may as a result of friendships erm, continue to do something which they’re not particularly interested in doing but on the other hand I feel that good friendships often help students to actually get through courses and that possibly weaker students who bond with...have friendships with either sort of stronger students or more motivated students can actually be a very good thing. (SW)

[On the value of student peer group social life] I think it is but it’s all part of their growing process, isn’t it almost? It’s the first time that they, you know, feel grown up. They’re at college, you know, and they’re thinking about uni and they want to live the student life that they really believe is out there and fantastic. Ermm, a lot of them do go out and socialise. (SH)

It’s [student peer group social life] very important. It’s fundamentally important. If they’re going to work in Travel and Tourism they’ve got to be able to communicate and talk to people about nothing and everything. So, the fact that they’re sociable is a fantastic, errr...advantage to them. (JH)

‘Sometimes it overtakes’

Yes, it is nice to have a nice social life here as well but sometimes it overtakes and they think that’s what it’s all about and, err, having been here for quite a while now you...year on year it’s the same thing, you know, you’ve got students, they’re coming towards the end of June, they’re so far behind cos all they’ve done is come here to meet with their friends and, you know, sit in the library and have a chat and not get on with their work. (AE)

I think it [student peer group social life] is an important part but that’s where we have...that’s where there is a bit of a problem with ethnic...cos a lot of the Asian...and I mean the Asian girls will tell you themselves, they’re not allowed out once they go home from college. That’s it, they have to stay in and that’s their culture. Ermm, so when they come to college...we have to look at this really cos, you know, this has been brought up before now, timetable issues and that, if you give like a three hour break in the middle of the day to these, because there are parties that go on predominantly for the Asian girls in the day, in the city centre, because they can’t go out at night, they go there and they don’t come back. And that’s a problem because then they start to fall behind and, you know, if their parents find out they’re in trouble. (AM)

I think sometimes it [student peer group social life] can be problematic actually because, particularly when you’re trying to do group work and stuff like that ‘I want to be with my friend, can I go and sit with her over there’. (SW)

Growing up and Learning

‘They really grow up before your eyes’

And you see the change in students from first years to second years, or often they do one year of GNVQ and they stay on and do the two years. They really grow up, you know, before your eyes, so much more confident, really hold their own. So it’s so valuable in terms of that. (BM)

They just mature, they mature a lot. You know, they get much more focused. (AM)

...students do tend to change between their, you know, first and second year. They sort of come back as very different people when they come back in September (SW)

Oh, definitely. I don’t know it’s as much a result of the course but I think it’s more just the maturity, I mean, two years is quite a lot of time for them to mature. They’re coming from school, they’re of a very different mindset to when they leave. And...but they do grow up a lot, definitely. (SH)

Because, as I say, in year one they are bit insecure, they don’t really see the relevance of what they’re doing. But, you know, by the end of year two they become mature adults. (AN)

Yeah. I would definitely say that the student matures quite a lot over two years, ermm, they gain more confidence and they basically do grow up (JF)

A huge difference, but I think that’s not only the qualification. I think the fact that they’re starting to grow up, take more responsibility. (BL)

They really change. For one, they mature over the summer break and for two, they’re a little more focused on what they want to do really [] There is a big change, and it’s usually for the better. (AE)

‘An eye-opener’

I suppose the fact that the industry isn’t all about being a rep or cabin crew [perceived value of the AVCE]. Cos when they come in, you know, if they don’t want to be a rep they want to be cabin crew and they don’t think of anything else. They don’t think about, you know, going into the marketing side, or the promotions side, management side [] As they go through the units and you expand upon it, they...can see that there’s an alternative route for me to go down. (AM)

Their aspirations will change, yes. And, that you know, they might realise that they can...there are lots of other jobs out there. That’s one of our responsibilities while we’re teaching it. (SW)

Well, I mean, a lot of their opportunities are opened up for them, err, things like work placements that we've done this year. They're not compulsory but it's something that the college offers as a sort of extra thing for them. (SH)

I was giving him some advice, in Portugal strangely enough, cos of a tutorial I was having with him. I said, what do you want to do and he said, I'd like to open up my own hotel and that. I said, well, before you even consider doing that, what you want to do is, once you get your degree, is to apply to a five star hotel group around the world and do a graduate programme [] He went, oh, I didn't realise you could do something like that. (JH)

And, yeah, they do progress academically. When they come to college they don't know anything really about tourism and when they leave college they've got a fairly good working knowledge of the industry...and, you know, they are able to hold down jobs. (JF)

Also, the good thing about the AVCE is the fact that everyone who comes on to these programmes, they either want to be cabin crew or resort reps or whatever, once they start studying the AVCE, the different topic areas, they can see what a diverse industry it is and that they can go into many, many fields. And, you know, that has been an eye-opener for a lot of students. (AE)

Financial constraints

'It's cheaper for them to stay at home'

Cos it's cheaper for them to stay at home [laughter] number one. (BL)

A combination of things, I think, and obviously finance as well [Why students may prefer to stay in the parental home to do an HE course] (AE)

A lot of them do want to stay on here because of the expense of, sort of, going off on to university (BM)

Well, I think a lot of...there's probably financial implications there I would have thought [Decision to pursue HE studies at case study institution] (SW)

I think a lot of students, you know, they do like the college. I think they probably see financial advantages, you know, perhaps getting a bursary (JF)

'Students have to work these days'

Well, it's the real world, students have to work these days. Well, some don't but the majority choose to work. I think in balance...if it's balanced it can do no harm. Over the years we have come across students who really are very hard-up and have to work to support the family. (JF)

And, I know a few students, particularly one who works at Warwick Castle, and the demands on her are quite high there. She lives in Warwick, she works in Warwick. She's just moved out of home so there's a lot of pressure on her to, sort of, get money, ermm, which did affect her performance in the last few months of college (SH)
Quite a few of them did get EMA [Educational Maintenance Allowance] but quite a few of them didn't. Errm, I mean there were students who were going to have to support other members of their family, their father was ill, mother, you know, didn't work. (SW)

You see, he hasn't got any money because of the situation at home. And he's a no-shower and he's, you know, if anybody was university it was him. (AM)

...we have had some students previously who've had to leave because they couldn't manage it and they couldn't afford not to work, so, you know, it's a shame. But, again, you've just got to do the best you can with them because they've got to work some of them cos they've just got no income whatsoever and they aren't supported by parents cos the parents can't afford it. (BL)

'It can cloud their priorities'

It all depends how strong the student is really. It's very difficult, very difficult for them to manage. Because the employer puts a lot of pressure on them because they're sixteen, because they're seventeen. And, you know, can you do some extra hours? Can you do some extra hours? And they say yes...and then all of a sudden the course work's gone by the by (AM)

I think the problem is, I say, obviously I only know half the story, but I get the impression sometimes from the students the employers put an awful lot of pressure on them to do additional hours somebody full time sick phones them up and says come on you've got to go and do the shift. And I think sometimes they find it difficult to say no and they don't... a lot of them I don't think they know their rights so they don't... you know, if they're part time workers they should know their rights better so they can say, no, I'm not going to do it cos I've got to go to college. (SW)

I think it's [part-time work] good but I think sometimes it can cloud their priorities to a certain extent (SH)

Ermm, but if we think they're doing too many hours, if their work is affecting their attendance then we decide to have words with them, we say, you have to make...you have to prioritise, you have to decide between college or work. You know, it's your life, we're here no matter what. But, there's only so much picking up we can do for you and if you're not here we can't teach you. (JH)

I mean we do have one or two where we have to have words with them saying, you know, you must prioritize, what's your priority, work or your job? You know, and they cut down on the hours (BL)

It can be a pain sometimes cos they sort of organise their college life a bit round it [part-time work] and it should be the other way round. So, we've had to speak to some students about it to put it into perspective. (BM)

They'll be back

'They've had enough really'

They [students] have had enough of studying really, they just want to get out there and get a job (AE)

...more than fifty percent [of students] are capable [of doing an HE course] it's just that they've had enough really and they need to take time out and think about it and maybe come back. (AM)

'Coming back later'

We do have quite a lot who'll go, well, quite a lot— maybe five or six— who'll take twelve months out and then in twelve months we'll get a phone call and they'll say I want to go back into HE. (AM)

I'd recommend to her really to go out and do some work first and find her feet find out what she's interested in and then come back later. Cos I really do think there's benefits of coming back later on having some work experience then going on to college later (SW)

So, I always say to them, if you're not going back into it now, you can always come back at another time. Don't, do not cancel out education in your mind, you can always come back later. (JH)

...they want to get some experience behind them. They may come back to education after...(AE)

The value of the AVCE

The AVCE as a stepping stone to HE

And they've also got on to some very good degree programmes as well at other colleges and universities. (AE)

Yes, I think it is [a valuable stepping stone to HE] in terms of marking and grading, in terms of time schedules, working with teams, all those sort of social skills as well. Yes, it does prepare them for HE (BM)

I think here you know, I can't say for... I think here it [AVCE] was very useful [for HE progression] because of the way they are taught and to write, you know. We do very much go down the referencing route here you which we don't have to for Edexcel. Edexcel don't say they have to have referencing and all the rest of it, but we do, we do go down that route especially in year two. (AM)

Oh yeah, it's [AVCE] very useful cos it's recognised, you know, by higher education institutions as a progression route. (BL)

Ermm, I think, you know, for academic purposes it is [useful]. It [AVCE] would be useful for the students if they want to go on to HE (AN)

Also, the course [AVCE] prepares *them for an HE programme* if they want to progress. (JF)

[On the value of the AVCE as a preparation for HE] Well,...yes and no. I think...ermm, if you get a sort of scrape [] Let's say you do twelve units and you get 480 points, you're really scraping a pass aren't you? I would say possibly, you know, your ability to go and take another course is, you know, fairly limited. You're probably likely to end up doing something travel and tourism. On the other hand, if you sort of, got a Double 'A' equivalent I think that your options would be much greater, yeah. And at that level, you know, academia would be recognised and you would be recognised as a quality student. (SW)

The value of the AVCE for getting a job in travel and tourism

And we've had a lot of students go on to some very good jobs with the AVCE in their pockets, if you like. (AE)

It's very hands-on and all the other skills that link to it, writing reports, writing presentations, standing up, getting them doing it, meeting, greeting people, it's all those skills that you necessarily don't get with an 'A' level course. (BM)

Ermm, for employment I think it [AVCE] is also useful (AN)

It's not...we get asked the same question every year, will my son or daughter get a job? We say, well we can't guarantee but, you know, it [AVCE] certainly gives them a cutting edge, a leading edge, you know, if they've got...if they can offer that qualification. (JF)

I think it's [AVCE] definitely well recognised within the industry. And I think with the right person, with the right characteristics to fit into the industry as well, because a lot of it isn't just on academics, it's on personality within the travel industry, I think if they've got both it makes them a stronger candidate. But I don't think per se...it might open the door but ultimately they've got to make their impressions at interview and really be committed. (SH)

‘Orphan’ Repeating Ideas

‘I think the industry get confused about the qualifications’

I think the industry get confused to be honest, about the qualifications that the kids go to them with because they don’t know, some of them don’t know what they are. (BL)

Well it’s [the AVCE] the equivalent of two ‘A’ levels, erm, but as I’m from the industry originally and somebody came to me with an AVCE, I know that some people are still not familiar with what the qualifications are. (BL)

It is recognised in the industry but I’m not sure if it’s as recognised as it was years ago when the old BTEC National Diploma was in place, ermm, and that might be one of the reasons that we changed back to the current BTEC (AE)

Partly yes. Also the...there was...we have a sort of view, I suppose that the industry recognises the BTEC National more than the AVCE. I think the industry saw the AVCE very much as an ‘A’ level in tourism. I think they see the BTEC National as more of a practical type of course. (JF)

...but apparently it wasn’t recognised in industry which is why they changed (AM)

And I suppose with these rapid changes in qualifications is really how the industry is going to actually take these, look at these. Ermm, as far as I get...I get the impression that a lot of, a lot of the people in the travel business are not a lot up to date with what’s happening in education, the changes in the qualifications. So...yeah, I think it might be difficult for students to explain later on, I mean they don’t know that much about their qualification, they don’t know why it’s been disregarded and something’s else’s gone in its place instead, so I think that might cause a few problems. (SW)

The Nationals [BTEC National Diploma in Travel and Tourism] out there in industry, I suppose where it matters doesn’t it, for them, for the qualifications, it is recognised more [than an AVCE in Travel and Tourism]. But again, like I say, it’s difficult if you’re in education to get your head round it, you know, for employers to then appreciate it, you know, it’s how it’s been sold to them. Err, so it’s up to these bodies to sort of go out and sell it to them otherwise all these things, they don’t mean anything to anyone do they, unless they’ve been through it. (BM)

‘Some of the units can be a bit woolly’

Well, that’s a...personally, I prefer students to take exams. That’s from my point of view, because I think the voca...the AVCE type of units, some of them are perhaps portfolio and it’s not standardised in every single college. So, we might have a very, very good student who deserves a distinction and there’s another student in another college that isn’t as good as ours who got a distinction as well. So, it’s not standard. (BL)

...it's not standard across colleges so people's interpretations could be different and I don't think it's fair then cos one might have a brighter student than another but it doesn't come out in the result whereas if it were an exam...I know that there are the odd units that are exam based but generally it's more assignments and everybody doesn't have the same assignments and marking criteria and so it's very varied. (BL)

Well, it's hard to mark because it's, it's...some of the way the criteria's been written, a student could have written something but the way the marking criteria has been written down, you're not sure if what is there equates to what is written in the EdExcel book let's say. (JH)

Erm, I think some of the units can be a little bit woolly in terms of their specifications. (SH)

'Lads are lazy'

...the lads are very immature and the girls aren't. And the lads are very lazy, very lazy. But I think it's just teenage lads, you know, they're generally laid back and they just leave...well not all of them, but generally, they are much more laid back and they don't seem to see any, you know, hurry.. (AM)

In most cases I found the girls were more serious. I think, with the exception of one boy, I found that all the girls, they're a lot more serious about their studies in general and generally a bit more mature in terms of their behaviour. (SW)

I've also found that girls are more committed to academic work, they want to go on to HE (AN)

I think academically the girls tend to hang on a bit more really. The boys tend to be, this last couple of years, the few I've had, they've been quite lazy really and they've had to be pushed along. Err, so in terms of sticking power the girls tend to do a lot better really. (BM)

The boys are lazy. They tend to be quite lazy and they do leave things to the last minute. (AE)

'Our institution is a good institution'

...you know, our institution is a good institution at the end of the day. The award is [Local University], you know, you can't really get any better than that, the Russell Group (AM)

...because we have an awful lot of contacts within travel and tourism because we have such a good reputation. (JH)

The college is quite strong as regards that [links with industry] and the inspection report actually brought that through as well. It has a fantastic reputation as well out there, not only in [case study college city] but in surrounding areas. Also, as you

know from OFSTED we were voted grade one and, ermm, only three colleges in the country got voted that. We're very, very high up if you like there. (BM)

'They all seem to gel so well'

I think it's fairly varied. I think a lot of students who come to the college like it because...that's one of the reasons why they come, cos it's very multicultural. And we do seem to have students from all sorts of different backgrounds which I think is good. (SW)

I mean, they all have different cultural backgrounds but on this course they are really close together (AN)

...and it's amazing how all the students...you know, it's multicultural and they all seem to gel so well. It's so nice to say. They get on all really, really well. (JH)

'It's very much sticking to own colour'

There tends to be her and the little group of...of other Asian female students that, sort of, sit together a lot and keep themselves to themselves (SH)

Just naturally they tend to, sort of, group obviously into their own, sort of, ethnic groups [] But no, it's very much sticking to own colour, unfortunately (BM)

You tend to find a lot of the...you get little cohorts of students in their ethnic groups, definitely. And I noticed particularly this year one or two groups that you might get a small cohort of, err, say Asian girls and a small group of white girls and there'd be that sort of barrier there. (AE)